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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

CASUALTIES OF WAR

On Wednesday, February 15, 1989, something happened that was not supposed to happen. The Red Army got out of Afghanistan.

What's left behind is a ruined charnel house. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans and tens of thousands of Russians are dead. Countless villages have been destroyed, their rubble salted with land mines that will continue to maim for years. Half the 15 million surviving Afghans are refugees.

There are ideological casualties, too—and for these we need feel no grief. One of them is the Brezhnev Doctrine, which is the idea that Communist advances are irreversible (and which had as fervent a following among American as among

Soviet conservatives). Another is the Brezhnev Doctrine's American cousin: the notion that the Western democracies are too irresolute and guilt-ridden to resist Soviet expansionism.

Some on the right are unable to accept the idea that even the Russians can't win 'em all. "Are the Soviets really leaving Afghanistan?" asks Elie Krakowski of Boston University, former director of the Pentagon's Office of Regional Defense, in the current issue of *The National Interest*, the conservative foreign policy journal. "Or is the recently announced 'pause' in their departure one of a growing list of indications that the much-touted Soviet 'disengagement' is more a product of American wishful thinking than it is of serious analysis of Soviet actions and intentions?"

Unless we are the victims of an unusually elaborate Kremlin hoax, the Soviet disengagement, despite being much-touted, is real. This calls for an explanation. And the people who have some explaining to do are those who have spent the past nine years dismissing this very outcome as inconceivable.

For example, George Will. Shortly after the invasion, Mr. Will noted that Senator Joseph Biden had said that U.S. economic

sanctions against the Soviet Union should remain in place as long as Soviet troops remain in Afghanistan. Mr. Will then made this prediction: "Biden, 37, will not live to see the troops withdrawn, and I'll bet he changes his mind."

Senator Biden, now 46, has had some serious health problems during the past year, but lately he's been feeling fine. He never did change his mind. And the Soviet troops are out.

I don't mean to pick on Mr. Will. Similar predictions were issued by many of his fellow conservative and neoconservative commentators. Over and over again, from December 1979 right down to the last few months, we were told that the essential nature of the Soviet regime, regardless of who might be in charge, made it unthinkable that Moscow would accept anything short of victory—and that Soviet totalitarianism was a juggernaut that democracies, by their very nature, are unfit to resist.

Perhaps the most influential exponent of this point of view has been Jean-François Revel, whose book *How Democracies Perish* caused a great stir four-and-a-half years ago. One of many things American neoconservatives have in common with the old American New Left is an apparent need for a pet French intellectual to validate their views. Mr. Revel is the right's Regis Debray.

The salient points in Mr. Revel's book appeared in an excerpt in the June 1984 issue of *Commentary*, which begins with this dramatic sentence: "Democracy may, after all, turn out to have been a historical accident, a brief parenthesis that is closing before our eyes."

The heart of Mr. Revel's argument is that "democracy faces an internal enemy whose right to exist is written into the law itself." That's us liberals. By contrast, "Totalitarianism liquidates its internal enemies or smashes opposition as soon as it arises; it uses methods that are simple and infallible because they are undemocratic. But democracy can defend itself from within only very feebly; its internal enemy has an easy time of it because he exploits the right to disagree that is inherent in democracy."

Mr. Revel writes about Soviet might and democratic weakness in a tone of voluptuous masochism. When he contemplates the Soviet system, his language is that of a trembling virgin admiring the ruthless strength of the brute who is about to ravish her.

He writes: "Communism and the So-

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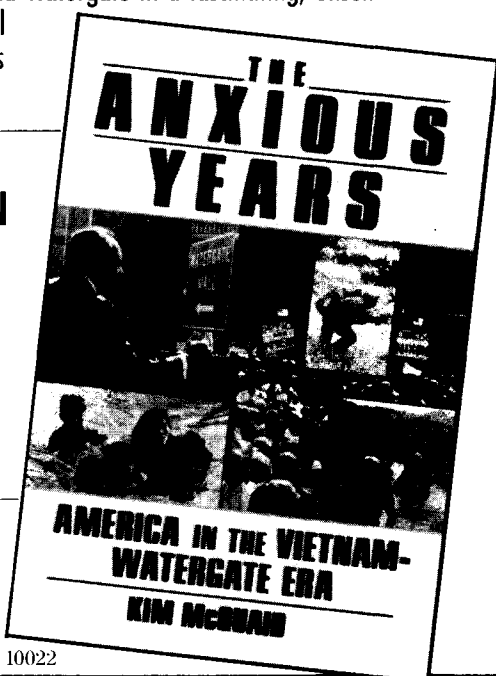
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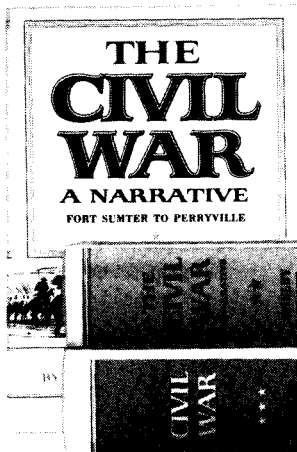
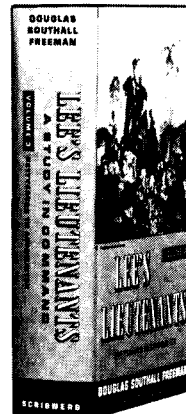
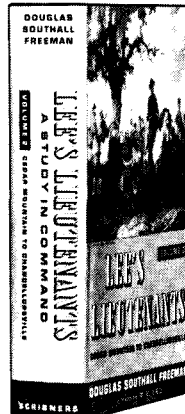
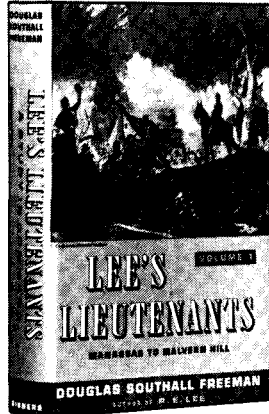


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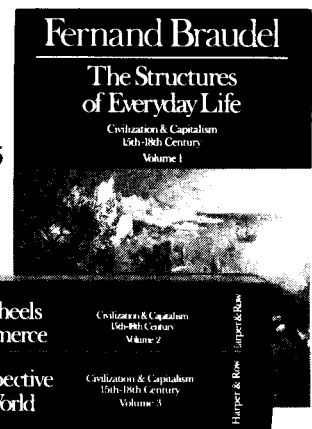


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TRANSMISSION FAILURE

To the editors:

The Cambridge Diarist questions why Jesse Jackson "thinks it wise to canonize a preliterate culture" ("Identity, History, Nostalgia," February 6). Notwithstanding that matters of canon are as irrelevant to non-writing people as, say, Praxiteles is to Michael Dukakis, we might answer by citing some fairly saintly traits among such people, including relative equality in social relations, production methods proven over tens of thousands of years (truly "time immemorial"), and utter indifference to the manias of ideology. Surely these are grounds for beatification of an earthly sort, if not the celestial order preferred by People of the Book. The notion of a "preliterate" culture is as racist as the notion of an Africa without history. Nothing in human existence per se argues for the inevitability of writing as a mode of cultural transmission. In our efforts to turn writing to other ends, we could do worse than to emulate those free of it.

RANDALL ROORDA
San Francisco, California

MEDIA PERFORMANCE

To the editors:

In "White House Watch" (January 9 & 16), Nicholas Lemann points out that in our book *Manufacturing Consent* Noam Chomsky and I propose a "propaganda model" to explain media performance, but he fails to describe or analyze its features. He chooses a sentence focusing on the fact that a victimized Polish priest got over 130 times as much attention in the major media as religious victims in U.S. client states and then derides our "weakness for tabular lingo." But he does not discuss our explanation or try to provide a better one. Later he speaks of the press's "short attention span" and its focus on the "daily byplay of political strategists," but he fails to ask whether these factors can explain the discrepancy between press attention to Father Popieluszko and the 100 religious victims in Latin America or the other cases we described.

Lemann infers that we "favor state control" from our statement, "In the long run, a democratic political order requires far wider control of and access to the media." But our devotion to state

control is made in the face of repeated stress on the importance of local group access to cable, local nonprofit radio and TV stations, and other ways of decentralizing media control and access. Lemann also writes that on a topic like elections in Central America we find official handouts less reliable than materials from private groups. He does not discuss whether the U.S. government is a reliable source in these cases, nor does he evaluate the quality of our sources.

He makes us into conspiracy theorists, because we "imply or say outright that the big-time press knowingly prints falsehoods and suppresses inconvenient truths, the better to maintain the party line." But if the model doesn't suggest that they do this by collective action, where is the conspiracy? We show that the media follow a party line as a consequence of structural factors, not joint decision-making. Apparently we have to prove that each decision-maker *intended* to suppress information in accord with the party line. This reduces the concept of conspiracy to meaninglessness.

EDWARD S. HERMAN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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To the editors:

My late father used to say that the media always get things just slightly wrong, so he would have been amused that Nicholas Lemann—in an article on the media yet!—miscites the title of his book. It is *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age*. Being a courteous man he also doubtless would have thanked Mr. Lemann for the plug, so I will do so now.

DAVID C. WARD
Washington, D.C.

Nicholas Lemann replies:

I described Messrs. Herman and Chomsky's view as one "in which the press fairly openly serves the interests of its capitalist masters, consistently covering up information that might further the cause of the left." To me this covers the central point of the propaganda model. As for Father Popieluszko, he was killed when the U.S. press was most focused on Poland. Archbishop Romero was killed before the press had really focused on El Salvador. Popieluszko's murder wasn't more important; the discrepancy can be explained by saying the press tends to focus on only a few things at a time.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 6, 1989

THE BANKER PLAN

The recent disclosure that James Baker owns stock in Chemical Bank of New York has the potential to clean up several mysteries that have long surrounded U.S. policy on Latin American debt relief.

The first mystery is why there hasn't been any real relief. As secretary of the treasury during the Reagan administration, Baker consistently refused to give the debtor nations a break and allow a reduction in their interest payments, even though many of them are fragile democracies on the brink of economic collapse.

The second mystery is why what little, fleeting relief there has been hasn't come at the expense of the American banks that made the bad loans in the first place. Instead, Baker has pushed a scheme by which taxpayers' money is cycled through world lending authorities to debtor nations in the form of new loans, which are then used to pay back the American banks. In short: Chemical Bank (for example) makes a bad loan, and you pay for it so that ChemBank's stockholders (Jim Baker, for example) don't have to. And that's not the worst of it. This "relief" doesn't last. The debtor nations still end up with debts they can't pay; the only difference is that by the time they get around to actually defaulting, American banks will be off the hook, and the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund will have to clean up the mess, with your help. (See "Baker's Bank Bailout" by Jeffrey Sachs, *TNR*, November 14, 1988.)

The third mystery is why Baker, the world's most proficient compromiser, the man who can always find a middle ground, has been so ruthlessly unbending on this particular issue. He has refused to give even an inch to Latin

American democracies, steadfastly keeping commercial banks from taking the hit that, according to capitalist principles, they deserve. (The tangible threat of default, after all, is what supposedly keeps bankers from making dumb loans, so insulation from that risk is bad for future market discipline.) Baker has also been uncharacteristically mean-spirited in privately denouncing people (Senator Bill Bradley, for example) who have had the audacity to note that his policy has been neither just nor in the interest of American foreign policy.

At this point in ethical indictments, editorial writers typically back off and carefully calibrate their position: they're not saying that a man of Baker's stature, integrity, godliness, etc., would actually be *influenced* by considerations of personal gain; it's the *appearance* of conflict of interest that concerns them. In a departure from journalistic convention, we're suggesting that Baker's thinking, and hence a critical U.S. policy, may well have been influenced by his personal finances. How many people, after all, are capable of fully divorcing the prospect of large financial gain or loss from their professional conduct? To be sure, they may be able to convince themselves that they've been impartial, and Baker can no doubt rationalize as effectively as the next man. But the subconscious is a funny thing . . .

A key question, then, is whether Baker's personal financial stake in the Baker plan was large enough to have weighed heavily on his mind. (Actually, the "Baker plan" is a misnomer; the plan, unveiled in the fall of 1985 as a broad outline of U.S. debt strategy, was only the surface manifestation of an intricate network of pressures orches-

trated by Baker to keep the Latin debt payments flowing.) Unfortunately, we don't yet know how large Baker's stake was. His financial disclosure forms say only that he owned at least \$250,000 of stock in ChemBank's holding company.

But one thing is clear: whatever the size of Baker's bank stock holding, its value over the last few years has been intimately tied to his policy pronouncements. During 1985 and 1986, in his first years as treasury secretary, Baker held a substantial interest in Texas Commerce Bank, which was founded by his grandfather. TCB had 40 percent of its equity capital tied up in loans to Latin America at the end of 1986. The bank was particularly exposed in Mexico (27 percent of its equity) when Baker shepherded through a "bailout" package that included substantial taxpayer-funded loans to Mexico from the IMF and the World Bank.

In April 1987, Chemical Bank acquired Texas Commerce Bank, and Baker thereby acquired his ChemBank shares. ChemBank was even more heavily exposed in Latin America than Texas Commerce had been. By the end of the year 146 percent of its shareholder equity was tied up in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela, and it was one of the five U.S. banks most heavily exposed in Latin America.

Early in 1987, Brazil declared a moratorium on debt servicing, causing bank stocks to fall. In late summer the Brazilian finance minister announced his intention to pursue a "non-conventional" approach to debt restructuring, by attempting to convert much of Brazil's debt into bonds paying a submarket interest rate. Chemical Bank's fortunes were closely tied to this proposal; as of the end of 1987 its \$1.5 billion of claims on Brazil amounted to half of shareholders' equity. Baker had the power to sink the Brazilian initiative, and he did.

The first showdown came in September, but it was only during the span from mid-December through the spring of 1988 that the success of his suppression of the Brazilian revolt became clear. During that period the stocks of big American banks soared in value, and careful studies have left little doubt as to the reason: the greater the bank's exposure to Brazilian debt, the more its stock rose. ChemBank's stock rose by 39 percent between December 15 and May 31, while the Standard & Poor's 500 rose by only eight percent.

The very least that the public deserves is to know whether Jim Baker made, say, \$100,000 on his bank holdings during that period or, say, a million. Baker's pious announcement that he will sell his ChemBank stocks leaves us in the dark about that. Indeed, the very phrasing of the agreement is dishonest: Baker says selling the stock is "the correct decision for someone committed to meeting the highest ethical standards." If Baker had high ethical standards he would have sold his bank stocks the day he became treasury secretary. Baker also made his decision sound entirely precautionary: the whole purpose was to eliminate any "appearance of conflict of interest" in his future doings as secretary of state. The press, which Baker has always had at his beck and call, pretty much bought this story. The headlines read "BAKER SELLING HIS STOCKS TO AVOID ANY CONFLICT IN STATE DEPT. ROLE." The subhead-

lines read "Action Said to Go 'Well Beyond' Ethics Rules."

Precautions against future corruption are fine. But in this case, the damage has been done. Baker has already profited from the Baker plan, and the Baker plan has already wreaked havoc on Latin American democracies. Letting him sell his stock now would let him off the hook and leave Latin America twisting in the wind.

A better solution is for George Bush to junk the Baker plan, which is now thoroughly discredited on all imaginable grounds: it is politically and economically wrong-headed, and it smells of corruption. Nicholas Brady, Baker's replacement at Treasury, should engineer lasting debt relief through interest payment reduction, and make the commercial banks (which just enjoyed a quite prosperous year) take the hit they've dodged for so long. Naturally, ChemBank's stock will start falling. When it reaches the level of, say, early December 1987, then Jim Baker should sell his stock. And while he's at it, he can tell us how much stock there is.

ARAFAT CHIC

Yasir Arafat has arrived. Denied a frontal political entry to America, he has come to the great power on a road less closely guarded: the avenue of fashion and pop culture. The "old man" of the Palestinian movement was just profiled in a fawning feature article in *Vanity Fair*. Arafat may have led his people down many blind alleys, but he has figured out something about the world of fashion and culture. In that realm, there are no visas to be granted or denied, no political tests to be met. You make it there as a purveyor of style, and of kitsch.

Condé Nast, the "founding father" of *Vanity Fair*, the "man who was vogue," would have approved of Arafat's metamorphosis. In April 1926, Nast's *Vogue* began a series of articles in the form of letters from Madame de Style to her daughter, Madame La Mode. The subject: "How to Launch a Newcomer into Society." Said Madame de Style: "One is much more apt to become friends with the leisure classes when they are almost at leisure. Don't you feel the truth of that?" Shrewd advice indeed.

Yasir Arafat has of course been around for some time. Americans met him as a professional revolutionary in the late 1960s, when Third World gunmen were the height of fashion. Americans also saw him on a passage he made to the United Nations in 1974, when he came bearing a freedom fighter's gun and an olive branch, with his eyes hidden behind dark glasses. They followed the Palestinian chieftain when, banished from Jordan, he created a political kingdom in West Beirut and South Lebanon. And they watched him sail into the sunset, in the summer of 1982, aboard a Greek ship, on what then seemed like a voyage to political oblivion. The people of Beirut, having endured the ruin he brought to their world, were thrilled to see him go. Far away in Tunis, the provincial North African capital that became his home, Arafat seemed destined to become

another Third World revolutionary castaway. He had had, as Andy Warhol might have put it, his 15 years of fame.

Now, after outwitting the political gatekeepers, he's back. The article in *Vanity Fair* does not dwell on Arafat's political "achievements," but it does display his sure mastery of style. "I like to dress the Arafat way," the "Chairman" told writer T. D. Allman. You know the look: battle fatigues à la mode, the uniform neatly pressed, matching *kefiyeh* and scarf around the neck, the leisure boots zipped up the side. Needless to say, there is a revolver, Smith & Wesson, but it isn't a threatening instrument. In the pages of *Vanity Fair*, a revolver is kitsch, just part of the look. It is "prudent" for a man in Arafat's line of work to "pack a piece," Allman tells us.

But *Vanity Fair's* Arafat is also a man of affairs, another busy executive being swamped by files. "Files! Files! Files! These files never finish. Though I am not a chief of state I must work twice as hard as anyone because I have to both administer a bureaucracy and run a revolution." The chairman then went through the files: "The Lebanon file," "the diplomatic file," "the *intifada* file." How did these files accumulate? "Satellite," the Chairman said. "Modern facsimile. Every developed technology." In one corner there was the "secret" FAX, in another the unclassified FAX. What is in the files? He did not say. In particular, he did not note that, filed under "Lebanon," in the old Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon, his men are back, reclaiming political turf. And their guns are not just for show.

And so it went: 40 hours and four countries aboard the Chairman's jet. Arafat and *Vanity Fair*, perfect together.

The line between fashion and politics is also blurred in a recent article in *New York* magazine titled "Arafat's Man in New York," about Columbia professor and Palestine National Council member Edward Said. There, too, there is plenty of kitsch, with dollops of literature and high culture. Said is a campus "cult figure," a man "striding about campus in a loden-green coat and a red paisley scarf." One minute he's negotiating with an American secretary of state, the next he's discussing "fashionable trends in structuralism and deconstruction," lecturing on Yeats, or playing the piano with nearly "concert-level skill." There is a photograph of Said in the mock costume of peasant boy—*kefiyeh*, flowing *abaya*, pistol, dagger under his sash. There is also the obligatory intellectual's unease with power. "I feel deeply uncomfortable with nationalism. I can see it as a necessity, but I myself am not interested in successful nationalism." The morning after the triumph, then, the intellectual would presumably go into opposition.

The *New York* reporter failed to pick up on some interesting aspects of Said's self-presentation. Said says his family left Jerusalem in 1947 because it was "inconvenient" to stay there. Odd choice of words for a zealous patriot. And then the uncompromising Pan-Arab patriot said that his father left Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt in the 1960s because there was no room for men like him—men of the Levant, men of trade, Christians from a marginal community in a world of Muslims.

From "Arafat's man in New York" we learn something

sure to find its way into the diets of the health-conscious: Arafat's own concoction for breakfast, a large salad bowl of cornflakes over which the Chairman pours hot tea. This nicely supplements *Vanity Fair's* observation that the Chairman is fond of honey. "Salt and sugar are the two poisons," he says.

So anyone in the Bush administration who is looking for Arafat in the political realm should look again. You will find him in the society pages. He has no fixed address, but he has plenty of good references and fashionable friends. And, of course, his visa application (not to mention his Visa application) will come by FAX.

NOTEBOOK

□ THE GREEKS DON'T WANT NO FREAKS: There is something odd about the pageant of restaurateurs, New Right activists, and assorted others who have trooped before the Senate Armed Services Committee to tell Sam Nunn and his colleagues about the moral fiber or lack thereof of Secretary of Defense-designate John Tower. What are the chances that any of these witnesses knows anywhere near as much about the subject as the senators themselves? After all, not so long ago, Tower was himself a member of the Senate, one of the world's most exclusive, socially incestuous, and gossip-ridden bodies. If Tower is prone to uncontrolled drinking, Nunn and his colleagues know. If Tower has the superego of a basset hound in heat, Nunn and his colleagues know. So why don't *they* tell us whether this man can be trusted? Recently the possibility of closed hearings arose; apparently some of the allegations about Tower are not fit for public consumption. As long as the committee has the door closed, we suggest they go ahead and settle the matter: tell Tower and all the witnesses to wait in the hall, and then handle the proceedings fraternity-style. Just flash a slide of Tower up on the screen, spend a few hours swapping stories about him, and vote. Three blackballs and he's out.

□ CURSE OF THE K-SCHOOL: During last year's presidential election, George Bush gleefully derided Michael Dukakis's policy ideas as having been "born in Harvard Yard's boutique." Bush assured red-blooded Americans that "when I wanted to learn the ways of the world, I didn't go to the Kennedy School. I came to Texas." Maybe so, but when he wanted to staff his administration, he headed for Cambridge. Bush's chief domestic policy adviser, for example, is Roger Porter, a tenured Kennedy School professor. At the Treasury Department, Yale graduate Nicholas Brady has been muddling through largely with the help of deputies Robert R. Glauber and David W. Mullins Jr., the two Harvard Business School professors acknowledged as the brains behind Brady's impressive 1987 report on the stock market crash. There's also a high Cambridge quotient in Bush's Cabinet: OMB Director Richard Darman

(Harvard College, Harvard Business), Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole (Harvard Law), EPA head William Reilly (Harvard Law), and drug czar William Bennett (Harvard Law). Even Brady went to Harvard Business School. None of this surprises us. Bush's campaign rhetoric convinced us early on that he was foola boola.

□ NOT QUITE OUT OF THE CLOSET:

It's becoming acceptable for men to seek therapy

Because of the sensitive nature of this story, patients' names have been changed.

—*The State*, January 31

(thanks to James A. Dunlap III, Columbia, South Carolina)

□ GUESS AGAIN:

Tired of Guessing Gorbachev Pay? It's \$30,000

—*New York Times*, February 1

Soviet Editor Reveals Gorbachev's Pay & Perks

At \$28,000, Leader Is Far Above the Average

—*Washington Post*, same day

(thanks to Tom Zembar, Springfield, Virginia)

How not to set up an ethics commission.

WATCHDOGS THAT PURR

GEORGE BUSH has brought press conferences and grandkids back to Washington, and he says he's going to bring ethics back, too. "We've got a new ball game here," he says, "a new era," "a different time." To usher in this new age, Bush has appointed eight "distinguished individuals" to an ethics commission. But there's something odd about this new crowd: it looks just like the old crowd. If the career histories of the ethics commission's members are any indication, Bush's new age was over the day it began.

The trouble isn't that the commission members are convicted criminals, or anything like that. In fact, they are overwhelmingly Washington lawyers in good social standing; they've sat at some of the best tables in some of the best restaurants in town. Nor are they even especially sleazy, though a few of them may qualify for the term. The problem, rather, is that as a group they are uniquely unsuited to the task of formulating a strict, effective ethics code. Almost without exception, these people are veterans of Washington's infamous revolving door; during the ten years since the Ethics in Government Act was passed, many of them have found themselves either getting frustrated by, or getting around, its stricter provisions. And a few of them have truly distinguished records of finding and exploiting loopholes in various laws. Letting these people lead an

overhaul of ethics rules is like letting General Motors engineers and lawyers rewrite auto emissions regulations.

At one commission meeting, Vice Chairman Griffin Bell, the former attorney general, made an offhand comparison between disclosure requirements, which compel public officials to spell out their financial holdings in general terms, and "the sumptuary laws in the 12th century." Bell, who was doing big-time antitrust lobbying (that is, anti-antitrust lobbying) within a couple of years of leaving the Justice Department, went on to entertain the commission with other tales of the "hassles" he's had with ethics provisions. Pretty much everyone seemed to empathize, and some questioned the very value of ethics rules. You know, said Fred Fielding, another commission member, "your innate thermometer tells you what you can and cannot do." This position seems rather at odds with the logic behind the commission's creation. As Bush himself put it, "The current [federal ethics] framework . . . does not incorporate sufficient safeguards to protect the public interest in honest and fair government."

The spiritual leader of the commission is Lloyd Cutler, who at 71 is a living legend among Washington's lawyer-lobbyists. He built Wilmer, Cutler, and Pickering into a powerhouse firm by the now-conventional means: providing services to whichever special interests could afford the rates, and employing lots of lawyers who had spent a few years in government. What's unusual about Cutler is that he's tended to his public image along the way, mostly by serving on blue-ribbon commissions and representing public interest groups in his free time.

But that doesn't mean you can look to Cutler for any strengthening of revolving-door legislation. "The existing substantive law relating to post-employment conflicts is sufficiently draconian already," he has told a Senate panel. Cutler's opinion goes against the grain of the Thurmond-Metzenbaum-Levin Post-employment Restrictions bill, passed by the Senate and endorsed by Bush during the campaign. More to the point, his opinion doesn't square with the various egregious examples of how much double-dealing you can get away with while still complying with the letter of the present revolving-door law. Thus, a few years ago Reagan aide Michael Deaver resigned, hung out a shingle as a lobbyist, and within weeks was on the phone with people he had worked with at the White House. All technically legal, it turned out.

TO UNDERSTAND why Deaver's behavior didn't violate the 1978 revolving-door law—which was designed to force people like him to wait a year before lobbying close government associates—you have to understand Fred Fielding's role in weakening the law. In 1983 Fielding, then Reagan's White House counsel, recommended to the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) that, as far as revolving-door rules go, the White House should be seen as consisting of nine separate agencies. This "balkanization" of the executive office of the president gave Deaver his opening to lobby White House "agencies" other than his own—i.e., virtually the entire White House.

Balkanization, funnily enough, was first proposed by Carter chief of staff Jack Watson—acting on the advice of then-White House counsel Lloyd Cutler. Reagan's first OGE director, Jackson Walter, refused to endorse the Watson-Cutler interpretation, writing to White House chief of staff James Baker in 1981 that "the Executive Office of the President is one umbrella 'agency' with changing components or units whose responsibilities themselves change from time to time." But in December 1982, a few months after Walter left his job, Fielding reopened the issue in a letter to David Scott, the acting OGE director and an old friend. Fielding, doing his lawyerly best to see how far the ethics law would bend, asked Scott to "make a determination that specific agencies within the EOP are 'distinct and separate' from the remainder of the EOP for purposes of the one year 'cooling off' period." Scott complied within a few months.

Fielding's other accomplishments in the field of ethics include co-chairing, with Cutler, a task force on ethics in government for Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Their report, issued in December 1987, offered as recommendation No. 1 that financial disclosure forms be "simplified," because presidential appointees say they have "difficulty in understanding and completing them." This proposal would have limited disclosures to two broad financial categories—holdings below \$10,000, and holdings above \$10,000.

The resulting disclosure forms would disclose radically less than the present forms, which force officials to specify which holdings are above \$250,000. And even the \$250,000 threshold is sometimes too low to give the public the information it needs in order to evaluate the ethics of public officials. (Consider, for example, Secretary of State Jim Baker's recently revealed ethical lapse. See page 7.) In view of Fielding's and Cutler's record on this front, it would have been easy for Bush to predict that the commission would propose, as it recently did, that the highest disclosure threshold be reduced to \$1,000. In fact, for all we know, he did.

ETHICS COMMISSION member Jan Baran, an attorney and federal election law expert, owes his selection to the commission to his most important former client—George Bush. Baran learned the election law ropes as executive assistant to the chairman of the Federal Election Commission from 1977 to 1979. Then he revolved into the Washington law firm of Wiley, Rein, and (Fred) Fielding. Bush picked him up as general counsel to the 1988 presidential campaign and to Bush's political action committee, the Fund for America's Future.

In this capacity, Baran demonstrated a keen nose for the loophole. For instance, federal laws don't allow a candidate to transfer money from his own PAC to his own campaign coffers, but he is permitted to give money to other political organizations or other candidates for office (contributions that in practice often serve as political IOUs). Early on, the Bush campaign found a way around the rule: the Bush PAC gave most of its money to people

and organizations that later became involved in Bush's presidential campaign. It was all in the family, or at least all in the family-to-be.

Baran has untangled campaign laws for several other powerful Republicans as well. In 1986 the National Republican Campaign Committee wanted some corporate donors to fund a televised appeal by President Reagan for Republican votes without their identities being publicly disclosed, as federal law requires. No problem, Baran said, so long as Reagan included some appeals for candidates for non-federal office, too. Baran may not have been the first practitioner of such "soft money" schemes, but he is certainly among the most enthusiastic. In discussing soft money in a midcampaign interview, he observed that "the Democrats finally are doing what's permitted instead of complaining about us. Now they're getting religion and doing the same thing."

CUTLER, Baran, and Fielding are the leading examples of the fundamentally flawed composition of Bush's ethics commission. But pretty much everyone on the panel has passed through the revolving door, and is thus more sensitive to the downside of ethics laws than to the upside. Judith Bello, for example, who is departing as general counsel in the U.S. Trade Representative's office, just signed on for a hefty salary with Sidley and Austin (which has plenty of foreign clients who might be interested in her government connections, although she has assured the *Wall Street Journal* that she'll be "focusing" on domestic trade matters). Attorney James Woolsey worked during the 1970s as general counsel to the Senate Armed Services Committee and undersecretary of the Navy in the Carter administration, and then, back in private practice at a Washington law firm, found himself on the boards of defense concerns such as Fairchild Industries and Titan Systems.

There is room for a few revolving-door veterans on the ethics commission. They are well positioned to testify to the sometimes needlessly cumbersome aspects of ethics rules, and to remind the commission that there's nothing *inherently* wrong with traveling the path between public and private sector. But there should also be a few members of the commission—a majority, say—who are incensed at the lax ethical atmosphere in Washington, at the amount of taxpayer money wasted through influence-peddling, and at the number of "public servants" who seem to lack an "innate thermometer."

The ethics commission has been given six weeks to "reform and revitalize" the whole federal ethics code, and its members aren't exactly working around the clock. So far, there have been two day-long meetings, and only a couple more are scheduled. Ambassador to Uruguay Malcolm Wilkey, the retired appeals court judge who is nominal chairman of the commission (Cutler and Fielding appear to be calling the shots), ventured at the opening meeting: "I would say that we're not likely to come up with any brilliant new ideas in this field." Probably a good guess.

ZACHARY CITRON

Scowcroft's right-wing, right-hand man.

DISTRUST, BUT VERIFY

IN THE DAYS prior to Vice President Dan Quayle's January 30 appearance before the National Religious Broadcasters convention, his prepared remarks circulated at the White House. They didn't stir much comment. But two alterations were made in the text as it passed through the National Security Council. Toward the end, there was a reference to "when" American officials attend the Moscow human rights conference in 1991. At the NSC, "when" was changed to "if," and Quayle emphasized the word when he delivered the speech. The text also mentioned El Salvador, which Quayle was to visit on February 6, as a country that had become democratic in the 1980s. At the NSC, this was beefed up. And so Quayle called El Salvador "a democracy still struggling against totalitarian forces trying to strangle it."

Quayle's editor was Robert Gates, the deputy national security adviser at the White House and probably the most underrated official in the Bush administration. The textual changes reflected Gates's firm anti-communism and deep skepticism about democratic reform in the Soviet Union. But Gates, 45, is no crude hard-liner. He's a Soviet scholar (his Ph.D. at Georgetown was in Sino-Soviet affairs), a former CIA official (an analyst, not a spook), a smooth and upwardly mobile bureaucrat, one-time protégé of William Casey, and, like Casey, a fellow with a bold streak. He has the knack of acquiring the confidence of his elders. He's short, has a boyish look despite graying hair, and speaks in a soft, high-pitched voice. Both Bush and Brent Scowcroft, the national security adviser, were impressed by him.

After experiencing a meteoric rise and slight fall in the 1980s, Gates had figured on staying at the CIA as deputy director under William Webster. Casey had made him his executive assistant, elevated him to head of all CIA analysis, then appointed him deputy CIA director in 1986. President Reagan named Gates to succeed Casey as CIA chief in 1987. But the nomination was withdrawn when senators complained about his failure to notify Congress in 1986 when he got wind of Ollie North's diversion to the *contras* of profits from arms sales to Iran. Gates settled in as the CIA's No. 2, not a bad job, but not the way he'd hoped to cap his career.

Unbeknownst to Gates, Bush and Scowcroft had other plans. A week before Christmas, Gates visited John Negroponte, Reagan's deputy national security adviser. Negroponte said he had just run into a journalist in front of the White House who'd told him that Gates would get his job under Bush. Gates was thunderstruck. He didn't believe it. He knew Bush, having briefed him frequently on Soviet affairs as vice president, and he'd asked Bush to swear him in as deputy CIA director. (Bush was happy to comply.) Gates was better acquainted with

Scowcroft. As a young CIA officer, he had been detailed to the NSC as a Soviet expert from 1974 to 1979, and worked under Scowcroft for the first two years. Soon after his meeting with Negroponte, Gates heard from Scowcroft. Would he take the deputy's job? Gates said yes. Scowcroft had already talked to Bush about it. The deal was wired.

Gates was instantly a major player. Each morning he, Scowcroft, and several CIA briefers go to the Oval Office to give Bush a national security update. More important, he and Scowcroft decided to restructure the NSC apparatus. Gates became chairman of the "deputies committee," a critical decision-making body whose members include the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Gen. Robert Herres), the undersecretary of defense for policy (Paul Wolfowitz), the deputy CIA director (Richard Kerr), and the undersecretary of state for political affairs (Robert Kimmitt). The committee meets several times weekly. In the comprehensive reassessment of foreign policy undertaken by the Bush administration, it will be the chief panel of review. Under Gates, it will also be an activist committee. It spearheaded the decision to continue military aid to the Afghan rebels after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The deputies committee met early in the morning of February 10 and sent the issue to the full National Security Council, which met minutes later. Bush and the other NSC members went along unhesitatingly.

AT THE CIA, which he joined in 1966 after undergraduate studies at William & Mary, Gates was never a passive or neutral analyst. Intelligence information wasn't worth much, he felt, unless it was tied to actual policy—in other words, part of the action. But analysts must play it straight, never stacking intelligence to buttress the policy of the recipient, according to Gates. Casey was attracted by Gates's insistence that the intelligence spewed out by the CIA was too tame, too non-controversial, writes Bob Woodward in *Veil*, which chronicles the CIA under Casey. Woodward quotes Gates as saying, "If no one gave a shit about what the intelligence analysis was saying, there would be no controversy, no pressure." Controversy and pressure bring analysts close to policy-makers. When that happens, analysts will know what kind of information policy-makers need, and policy-makers will know the inevitable gaps in intelligence. In a speech last December before he switched to the White House, Gates advocated the "aggressive use of intelligence. We in intelligence must think offensively. . . . We in intelligence are the shock troops of low-intensity conflict."

"Most career analysts lack two things Gates has in abundance," says Michael Pillsbury, an assistant defense secretary under Reagan. "First he has an instinct for the jugular. He knows which policy issues are important and concentrates intelligence assets on them." After the TWA Flight 847 hostages were released in 1985, Gates wrote a paper arguing that the United States and Egypt, working together against Libya, could "redraw the map

of North Africa." John Poindexter, then deputy national security adviser, used the paper to promote a joint American-Egyptian invasion of Libya, which Gates hadn't suggested. The invasion never came off. Gates's "second knack," says Pillsbury, "is the ability to make public in speeches or articles or press interviews intelligence findings. Most analysts are content to leave it in a top-secret memo."

ON HIS OWN in 1986, Gates began collecting bits of unclassified information about the Soviet strategic defense program from the Defense Intelligence Agency, the CIA, and others. In January 1987 he packed the material, some of it highly technical stuff about lasers and particle beam weaponry, into an explosive speech. Gates said that Mikhail Gorbachev believes Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative will work and is bent on killing it, while preserving both the Soviet missile defense system and first-strike ICBMs.

"In a relationship in which for 20 or more years strategic stability presumably has been based on mutual vulnerability, the Soviet Union has been working to eliminate its own vulnerability and consolidate a unilateral advantage," Gates said. His apocalyptic line wasn't quite what Reagan had begun preaching about Gorbo. "Over the past ten years the Soviet Union has spent \$150 billion on strategic defense, or almost 15 times what the United States has spent. . . . They believe we can develop a highly effective strategic defense, in part because they are doing large elements of such a program themselves." Gates said abandonment of SDI "not only would preserve [the Soviets'] monopoly in strategic defense, but would be a key indicator of a loss of U.S. will to compete militarily. Moreover, failure to proceed with an American strategic defense would hand the Soviets a unilateral military advantage of historic consequence, with awesomely negative implications for strategic stability and peace."

Gates was more withering still in criticizing Gorbachev in a speech last October 14. The speech, shown twice in its entirety on C-SPAN, prompted Secretary of State George Shultz to complain bitterly to Gates. The Soviet Union is an economic and political mess, Gates said, but a threat to the United States. He didn't try to reconcile how a crumbling power could pose such a problem. "While Gorbachev's bold political moves and radical rhetoric have shaken the Soviet system, he has not yet really changed it." Gates said Gorbachev wants détente to obtain technology, stop American military modernization, hold down his own defense spending, and lock in "Soviet strategic gains of the last generation." Not only has Gorbachev increased military spending, he's maintained his commitments to Angola, Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. "We should ask ourselves if we want the political, social, and economic revitalization of the historical and current Soviet system," he said. "I think not."

His first stint at the White House as a junior official came during an earlier spell of détente. Gates was willing to

poke at the Soviets then too. In 1974 he devised a plan for a White House visit by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. A senior official would invite the anti-Communist novelist and escort him around the building. Along the way, Solzhenitsyn would run into President Ford, and they'd chat, a supposedly spontaneous encounter. But the scheme was nixed, and Solzhenitsyn never came. Now, if Solzhenitsyn agrees to visit, Gates can guarantee him a session with the president, and a lot more.

FRED BARNES

Test scores don't lie.

BACK TO BASICS

WHEN I WAS in public high school in Texas in the 1950s, one of the last things a girl wanted was a reputation as a good student. Girls who got good grades were "brains," and brains were socially handicapped. Most girls strived to cultivate the June Allyson image: a follower, not a leader; cute and not too smart, or at least not so smart that the guys felt threatened.

Apparently—despite the women's movement and the presence of significant numbers of successful women as role models—it is still considered inappropriate in most schools and colleges for girls to seem "smart." As a female student at Hunter High School in New York City recently explained, "I make straight A's, but I never talk about it. . . . It's cool to do really badly. If you are interested in school and you show it, you're a nerd." In elite institutions, where students are chosen for their academic ability, girls are more willing to challenge the boys academically than they are in non-selective schools and colleges. But with the demise of most single-sex girls' schools and colleges, there are now even fewer institutions where girls can be leaders and achievers without feeling like freaks. The popular culture—through television, movies, magazines, and videos—incessantly drums in the message to young women that it is better to be popular, sexy, and "cool" than to be intelligent, accomplished, and outspoken: Madonna has replaced June Allyson.

In 1986 researchers Signithia Fordham and John U. Ogbu found a similar anti-academic ethos among both male and female students at an all-black high school in Washington, D.C. They noted that able students faced strong peer pressure not to succeed in school. If they did well in their studies, they might be accused of "acting white." Fordham and Ogbu observed that "peer group pressures against academic striving take many forms, including labeling (e.g., 'brainiac' for students who receive good grades in their courses), exclusion from peer activities or ostracism, and physical assault."

These attitudes, whether expressed by boys or girls,

blacks or whites, discourage academic achievement. If boys or girls who study are derided as “goobs” and “dweebs”—two of the many pejorative terms for good students catalogued in a recent *New York Times* survey of teenage slang—then most boys and girls are going to avoid studying. Permissive parents and permissive educators don’t help the situation by leaving adolescents adrift in a culture shaped largely by the mass media. A national mathematics assessment released in 1988 revealed that American teenagers know the basics taught in elementary school, but their academic performance trails off as they get older and peer pressures begin to take effect. Only half of all 17-year-olds “reached a level of proficiency associated with material taught in junior high school mathematics.”

UNFORTUNATELY, outside the cultural bubble inhabited by Madonnas and dweebs lies a real world, and in that world poor academic achievement is not without consequences. Last March a comparison of students in 17 nations reported that our fifth-graders ranked eighth out of the 17; our ninth-graders ranked 16th out of the 17 (beating out Hong Kong only); and our 12th-graders ranked last in biology, third from last in chemistry, and fourth from last in physics. Just a few weeks ago another international test of mathematics and science was released by the Educational Testing Service, with the same dismal results. Compared to 13-year-old students in Ireland, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom, and four provinces in Canada, our students scored last in mathematics and well below the mean in science.

There is a growing real world correspondence between our declining test results and our declining economic prowess. Those countries that promote hard work and self-discipline in school have surged ahead, eroding the technological edge that we once enjoyed. According to the *New York Times*, Japan’s annual share of American patents grew over the past 15 years from four percent to 19 percent, while our own share dropped from 73 percent to 54 percent. Experts point to the lack of a well-educated labor force as one of the prime causes of our diminishing economic position. Government policy is partially responsible, as are inadequate levels of savings and investment. But we have wounded ourselves, socially and economically, by failing to nurture scientists, engineers, inventors, and, in fact, a general citizenry who can read, write, compute, and adeptly use technology. In the 17-nation science study, the bottom quarter in the ninth grade of U.S. schools is described as “scientifically illiterate.”

So what are we doing about it? Among the nations that regularly lead the world in international competitions, like Korea and Japan, there is a strong core curriculum that begins in elementary school. U.S. educators should be demanding that all future teachers get a solid liberal education, one that includes math, science, history, literature, and foreign language; and some educators are. Educators and concerned citizens should also be insisting that all children learn science and mathematics and history and literature and a foreign language in every grade from ele-

mentary school onward; but few educators are, because they either don’t believe in doing so or know there aren’t enough qualified teachers to offer such a rich curriculum.

WHAT WE shouldn’t be doing is denying that a problem exists, or jettisoning objective measures that reveal our educational shortcomings. Yet that has been one effect of the anti-testing movement, which just won a federal court order in New York banning the use of Scholastic Aptitude Tests as the sole criterion for awarding state scholarships, on the grounds that the SAT (the nation’s most widely used college admission test) discriminates against girls. Judge John M. Walker, noting that boys get higher scores than girls, ruled that this use of the test to distribute scholarships violates the equal protection clause of the Constitution.

Down this path lies a great deal of foolishness. Racial and gender disparities crop up on most objective measures of academic performance. On the science tests that were given to students in 17 nations, boys outscored girls in every country, and the gap increased with each age level; only among the most advanced seniors in Hong Kong and Sweden—and only on the biology exam—did girls outscore boys. In the history assessment, boys usually outscored girls, and sometimes the differences were startling. For example, in a national history assessment in 1987, boys were more likely than girls to locate the Rocky Mountains on a map, to know that Columbus discovered the New World before 1750, and to know that the Great Depression occurred between 1900 and 1950. Are these gender-biased questions? It doesn’t seem so.

Some of the differences between the genders and the races on tests of subject matter can be accounted for by different course-taking patterns. For example, white males tend to take more advanced courses in science than do females and members of minority groups. Something else is amiss, however, because even when girls and blacks and Hispanics take physics, the white males still outperform them by a considerable margin. Since I don’t believe that white males have a genetic edge, I have to conclude that deeply ingrained self-deprecation and ever present peer pressures combine to depress the aspirations and achievements of girls and minority students.

Thus, if the SAT were abolished, there would still be gender disparities and racial disparities on other tests. But since I happen to think that the SAT has outlived its usefulness as a college admission test, I am not going to raise a hue-and-cry about its potential demise. Far better in determining whether a student deserves admission to a selective institution would be a test that measures what he or she has actually studied—or should have studied—in science, history, literature, mathematics, and foreign language. Because the SAT is content-free (except in its mathematical questions), high schools can afford to ignore content. If the SAT were replaced by achievement tests, high schools would be likelier to teach the subjects that matter, and students would be likelier to take them. Both developments would narrow the achievement gap that

places us at a disadvantage in international comparisons.

But no matter what kind of test is used, we will continue to have serious cultural problems undermining educational achievement: the negative attitudes of students who jeer at those who do well in school; the negative attitude of parents who urge their sons to strive and achieve but not their daughters; and the negative attitude of educators who accept the destructive peer culture, not acknowledging their responsibility to establish a climate in which academic achievement, hard work, and brainpower are honored.

We could tackle the achievement gap by following the lead of Judge Walker in New York and rejecting the validity of all tests in which white males consistently outperform females and members of minority groups. Maybe we could even stop participating in international assessments that tell us how badly we are doing compared with other countries.

Or we could take a hard look at the social and cultural attitudes among teenagers and adults that discourage girls, blacks, and Hispanics from seeing themselves as future engineers, doctors, and scientists; and then we could think hard about ways to change the peer pressures that put down academic achievement. We will continue to lose ground and squander our educational resources until teenagers and their parents come to recognize that academic achievement requires the same motivation and active involvement as achievement in sports or music.

DIANE RAVITCH

Diane Ravitch is a historian of education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Democracy, Zimbabwe-style.

ONE PARTY FITS ALL

ON A PATCH of rutty farmland in southwest Zimbabwe, a half-dozen men in green overalls are laying out rows of cabbage plants and pumpkin seeds in their new collective vegetable garden. Barely a year ago these men were called "dissidents," and they were terrorizing the region with a campaign of murder and sabotage. Now called "returnees," they have literally traded their guns for plowshares.

A few hours away in the capital, Harare, lawmakers who not long ago were jailed and tortured on suspicion of treason now rub shoulders in Parliament with their former jailers. One of the lawmakers, Sydney Malunga, a veteran black nationalist and parliamentary whip, was detained three times, manacled, and beaten before he finally was acquitted of charges of assisting the dissidents. But he says he has no hard feelings. "I believe political leaders must be magnanimous," he explains.

"We don't want to open up old wounds."

After five years of violent conflict, peace has returned to Africa's youngest country, the land formerly known as Rhodesia. It is called "unity," the result of a negotiated merger of the country's two main political parties, President Robert Mugabe's Zanu and Joshua Nkomo's opposition Zapu. The unity agreement, signed on December 22, 1987, is being watched all over Africa as a rare example of political accommodation between warring ethnic groups. It has special meaning in South Africa, where Zimbabwe represents a precedent for transition to black majority rule. For the first time since Zimbabwe achieved independence from white rule in 1980, the news is of the prospects for prosperity and development, not of terror and bloodshed. Not a few Zimbabweans talk proudly today of a political miracle.

UNFORTUNATELY, the miracle is not complete. Despite the achievement of national unity, no effort has been made to establish what actually happened in the southwest provinces of Matabeleland, where the army and the dissidents waged a bitter war that left thousands of peasants dead or maimed. High-ranking government officials who oversaw the brutal behavior of security forces remain in power. The machinery of state repression, though idled, remains intact, including draconian emergency laws inherited from the Rhodesian regime. The failure to settle accounts or reform the system is especially worrisome because the agreement to merge the two main political parties has left Zimbabwe a de facto one-party state; a year from now Mugabe plans to make it a de jure one-party state by outlawing opposition. And while the ethnic tensions that erupted into civil war are muted, they are far from resolved.

In 1982, after arms caches were discovered on land owned by his supporters, Nkomo was expelled from a short-lived government coalition, an act that prompted members of his old guerrilla army to desert the national army and begin their dissident campaign. The 1987 unity agreement brought Nkomo and his Zapu colleagues back into the government for the first time since the 1982 split. Most Zimbabweans and many independent observers had long believed that violence in Matabeleland was unlikely to end without a merger of the two parties, which basically represent ethnic constituencies rather than ideological points of view—Zanu drawing support from Mugabe's majority Shona-speaking people, Zapu from the minority Ndebele. The resulting single-party configuration is generally viewed as the lesser of evils. Mugabe himself argues that multiparty systems in Africa inevitably break down along tribal lines, and he cites the apparent success of the unity accord to justify his proposed entrenchment of single-party rule.

The upside of de facto one-party rule is hard to argue with. Almost as soon as the unity agreement was signed, the violence ended. A presidential amnesty was declared, and the dissidents came in from the bush. More than 4,000 refugees returned home from neighboring Botswana. The region's economy is on the upswing after a

decade of decline. Urgently needed development projects have begun to sprout up: a dairy processing plant, a slaughterhouse, newly paved roads. The region's remaining white commercial farmers—some 70 of them were killed by dissidents and many abandoned their farms—have resumed a normal life after years under virtual siege.

Bulawayo, the main city in Matabeleland, is a changed place. Tens of thousands of displaced people who had crowded its suburbs have returned to their farms. Reporters who once looked over their shoulders for plainclothes agents of the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) can now spend an evening drinking beers at Grey's Inn with the man who was once Zimbabwe's most celebrated political prisoner, Dumiso Dabengwa. The former intelligence chief for Nkomo's old guerrilla army, Dabengwa was jailed for more than four years after his acquittal on treason charges and finally released in December 1986. He says he supports the unity accord. "Given the history of hostility between our two parties," he says, "there is no way there could be stability except by coming together. There was no way that Zapu could ever be trusted by a Zanu government." Yet he says he opposes Mugabe's plan to ban opposition parties permanently: "It does not provide the checks and balances that are necessary."

IRONICALLY, the dismantling of the opposition has increased political debate and criticism of government. Before unity, such criticism was equated with support for the dissidents. But in recent months, Zimbabwe's Parliament has come alive with heated debates about economic policy and corruption. There is a campaign to eliminate the death penalty. The *Bulawayo Chronicle*, which sells out instantly even in Harare, runs investigative stories about corruption among high government officials. "The povo [the masses] feels a sense of betrayal," the *Chronicle* editorialized last November, denouncing unnamed but well-known government officials who it said were "inebriated with power." Such criticism was inconceivable before the unity accord.

The question being asked all over Zimbabwe is how long such criticism will be tolerated. Unity has brought peace, but not repentance. Ruling party politicians seem cavalier about past abuses. Emmerson Munangagwa, the justice minister, was minister of security throughout the conflict in Matabeleland. He was directly responsible for the activities of the CIO, whose agents were accused of widespread torture. The CIO also is believed to have played a role in the disappearance of at least 80 rural community leaders in Matabeleland in 1985. When I began an interview with a reference to the "dark days" in Matabeleland, Munangagwa laughed and interjected, "Those were exciting days." When I asked him about the disappearances, he replied: "I don't have a single case of that nature."

Even Munangagwa's bitterest foes seem disinclined to hold him accountable. Kembo Mohadi, a veteran nationalist and Zapu MP who was detained, beaten, and suffocated in canvas sacks filled with water after the 1985 general election, actually sued Munangagwa and the home affairs

minister, Enos Nkala, soon after his release from prison in 1986. Mohadi won a judgment in the case but didn't collect damages; neither Nkala nor Munangagwa even bothered to respond to the suit. After the unity agreement Mohadi decided to drop the matter. "I personally don't really accept retrospective condemnation," he said with a shrug. Politicians on both sides seem content to be in power and loath to settle accounts if that would jeopardize what is for many of them their only source of income.

The logic of forgive and forget is harder to swallow at the grass-roots level. "Whenever my children ask what happened to their father, I tell them that I don't know," said Sonile Dube, whose husband, Simon Dube, 50, was one of two dozen men abducted by unidentified gunmen from their homes in the remote rural district of Silobela, once the scene of heavy dissident activity and reprisals by security forces. Sitting barefoot on a goatskin laid out on the floor of her smoke-filled kitchen hut, Mrs. Dube recalled threats by Zanu party officials against unnamed local men, followed by the knock on the door one January night. She and eight other Silobela wives, with the help of the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace, have sued the government for official confirmation of their husbands' fates. A judge has ordered a police investigation of the disappearances, so far without result. It remains to be seen how the government will respond if others seek redress of their grievances through the courts. Most Ndebele victims of rights abuses are reluctant to do so for fear of government reprisals.

IN THEIR perceptions and attitudes, the Shona and the Ndebele seem in many ways as polarized as ever. The Shona still tend to blame the conflict in Matabeleland on the supposed militaristic tendencies of the Ndebele. Yet most Shona still know little about the behavior of their government's mostly Shona security forces in Matabeleland. There seems to be little understanding of the profound fear and mistrust that most Ndebele feel toward the government.

The argument that a public accounting of past abuses would be painful and divisive was also made in 1980, at the end of the brutal civil war that led to independence. "Reconciliation" was the theme of Mugabe's first address to the nation then, and indeed the remarkable reconciliation between Zimbabwe's black majority and the remaining 80,000 whites may be the country's most impressive achievement. Even Ian Smith, Rhodesia's last prime minister, whose stubborn resistance to majority rule cost 30,000 lives, was never brought to book for his crimes and is now a prosperous rancher. Today some Zimbabweans cite that record as precedent for sweeping the more recent conflict under the rug. "We could have tried and hanged Mr. Smith," said Lawrence Vambe, a respected Shona historian. "We could have tried all those who participated in Smith's war who had blood on their hands. If there was a compulsion to settle old scores, this country would have seen much more suffering than we have seen, especially with the whites."

But that argument overlooks an important fact: when Ian Smith was let off the hook, so were his methods, which wound up being put to use by Zimbabwe's new leaders in Matabeleland. A public accounting of Smith's abuses would have illuminated the laws and tactics he employed, as well as the other people who used them, much in the manner of the exhaustive post-mortems undertaken in recent years in Argentina and Brazil under the banner of *nunca más*, "never again".

The unresolved grievance of the Ndebele people is by no means the only source of potential conflict—and repression—in Zimbabwe's fragile democracy. Now that the Ndebele are back in the fold, the Shona themselves are riven with internecine rivalries. The Shona-speaking people are actually a collection of smaller tribes in competition for power and patronage, and for slices of what is still a very small economic pie. The country has made only limited progress in resolving a fundamental dilemma of its inheritance: How can an economy built to serve 250,000 white settlers meet the needs of a rapidly growing population of eight million blacks? There are wide gaps between rich and poor. School enrollment has nearly tripled since 1980, but so has unemployment. By some estimates unemployment will double in the next five years, leaving one person in three out of work.

An election is scheduled for 1990. No one knows what shape the balloting will take now that Zapu and Zanu are one, but some Zimbabweans are hoping that this will be the first meaningful referendum on the country's political leadership after a decade in power. Mugabe's government calls itself socialist, but Mugabe has proceeded with what

most Western observers regard as commendable caution in implementing his egalitarian designs. Some of his most vocal critics are on the left, particularly leftist students and lecturers at the University of Zimbabwe. A series of student demonstrations against corruption last September provoked a heavy-handed police response, including beatings and detentions. There have been other disquieting omens as well. In December a provincial governor briefly detained and assaulted two *Chronicle* reporters who were investigating his real estate dealings; Mugabe and other ministers responded by blaming the reporters. Earlier a popular politician, Edgar Tekere, was expelled from the party, apparently for being too bellicose in his denunciations of corruption and single-party rule.

Zimbabwe's leaders deserve more credit than they've been given for stepping back from the precipice of protracted tribal warfare; would that some of their neighbors were able to resolve their rivalries as Mugabe and Nkomo have done. But the nation's failure to confront its past leaves open the possibility of future episodes of violence and repression. And entrenching one-party rule seems to invite that prospect by closing off political avenues of dissent for those who are unhappy with the status quo. For now, there is no guarantee that Zimbabwe's newfound unity promises more than just a lull before another storm.

BILL BERKELEY

Bill Berkeley is the author of *Zimbabwe: Wages of War*, a report published in 1986 by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights.

Tales from the American Jewish left.

BROKEN VESSEL

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN

THE GRANDEUR of a metaphor can be sobering when casually applied. Consider what lies behind the name *Tikkun*—the name of a "progressive" Jewish magazine that began publishing in 1986. The word "*tikkun*" comes from the writings of the 16th-century Jewish mystic, Isaac Luria. According to Luria, the universe was created after God contracted to a point, leaving a void. The fire of God's spirit emanated from that point into that primordial space, filling spiritual forms—known by the mystics as "vessels"—with formless light. The vessels, though, could not withstand the intensity of God's light and shattered. This "breaking of the vessels" scattered sparks throughout the universe, mixing divine light with fragments of earthly

dross. The task of man was *tikkun*—the undoing of catastrophe, the repair of the shattered vessels.

So *Tikkun*—the magazine—is setting itself an ambitious task, nothing less than (in its words): "To mend, repair, and transform the world." Its approach is to define itself metaphysically, politically, and stylistically in opposition to the neoconservative *Commentary*. While the name *Commentary* implies focused interpretation and analysis, *Tikkun* suggests excavations amid the shattered vessels, prospecting for redemption; that is precisely the atmosphere the magazine creates, in loosely edited, wide-ranging, and openly contradictory essays.

In December *Tikkun* brought that spirit to a conference

in New York with more than 1,800 people in attendance. Its project was "Reconstituting the Progressive Tradition of American Jewish Intellectuals," and its argument was that there is an essential link between Judaism and left-wing politics. This claim has become familiar: it is often used, for example, to explain the strong identification of American Jews with the Democratic Party, a bond that has weakened only slightly during the Reagan years. The problem is that although there may have been Yiddish folk songs sung during the 1930s at Communist meetings, and there was many a Jewish patronymic among the radical "revolutionaries" of the 1960s, the left itself can hardly be considered an unambiguously hospitable home for Judaism as Judaism. So the conference was meant to provide a bit of *tikkun* after decades of fractious politics and conflicting obsessions; it aimed to create a united front to redeem the universe—or at least Israeli policy and domestic politics.

MICHAEL LERNER, the editor of *Tikkun*, could attempt such a "reconstitution" because he is not distressed by outright contradiction; the implicit argument was that anything to the left of neoconservatism shares similar "progressive" goals. There was hardly a major figure of the left unheard from: Edward Said on the Palestinians, Victor Navasky on the neoconservatives, Ted Solotaroff on American Jewish literature, Arthur Waskow on radical politics and religion, Marshall Berman on Modernism, Abba Eban on Israel, Cornel West on blacks and Jews, Letty Cottin Pogrebin on radical feminism, Michael Harrington on American politics, Howard Fast on Jewish culture. Alfred Kazin spoke. So did Irving Howe and Grace Paley. There were leftists old and new, from the radical religious to the secular intellectual, from democratic socialists and converted fellow travelers to re-born returners to ancestral faith.

Along with this miscellany that gave the conference the unpredictability of a bazaar, there were distinctively Jewish variations on left-wing looniness. Phyllis Chesler, a radical feminist, piously declared that women's bodies were "colonized everywhere in the world, not only on the West Bank"; she then asked where the Israeli parachutists were who could rescue her oppressed sisters held hostage in "Saudi Arabia or Westchester." Arthur Waskow praised the ritual of living in the Jewish sukkah—the hut open to the sky and the elements during the fall holiday—as an antidote to the Western fallout shelter. And the Hebrew blessing chanted after the conference's celebratory dinner had one line, and only one line, changed to refer to God as a woman—an example of what might be called affirmative blessing. There was even a Hebrew song that seemed something of an anthem for the conference—"Hine Ma Tov," whose lyrics proclaim how good and sweet it is for brothers to sit together in amity. That was the song dedicated to "our Palestinian brothers" at one session; and that was the song that closed the conference after a fractious parliamentary-style session about the PLO.

Even in its more sober aspects, the conference was in the

tradition of left-wing Judaism that developed with the counterculture. During the 1960s and 1970s there were many Jewish participants in radical political movements. Some took their Judaism seriously indeed. They became observant Jews, following the laws of kashruth, regularly attending prayer services, dedicating themselves to Jewish spiritual life. There were communes and "alternative" synagogues; there were spiritual heroes (Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Buber) and biblical heroes (almost any of the prophets); there was even a guide, modeled on *The Whole Earth Catalog* (called *The Jewish Catalog*), with information on how to make Sabbath candles, wine, matzoh balls, and skullcaps, how to build a sukkah, bring the messiah (by planting trees in Vietnam), and generally how to connect Judaism with the counterculture.

ONE OF THE major documents of the Jewish counterculture was "The Freedom Seder" created by Waskow, now a member of the *Tikkun* editorial board and a ubiquitous commentator at the conference. Its origins were recounted by Waskow: he was in Washington during the Passover holiday in 1968, just after Martin Luther King was assassinated, and he realized, looking about at the police presence, that this was Pharaoh's army. He saw the United States as Egypt, the counterculture providing the Mosaic miracles, and blacks, Vietnamese, and a host of Third World peoples oppressed by white capitalists as the slaves. Waskow's own version of Mosaic redemption was to help create the Institute for Policy Studies—never known for its warm vision of Israel—and the short-lived organization Breira, which in 1974 objected to peaceful demonstrations against Yasir Arafat when he appeared at the United Nations.

Waskow has mellowed some, but the aura of the Jewish counterculture still hovers. Michael Lerner himself headed the Berkeley chapter of the SDS during the mid-'60s and in 1969 was indicted as one of the "Seattle Seven" for conspiracy to destroy federal property (a charge on which he was cleared three years later). He studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary, obtained a Ph.D. in philosophy and then a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. In the late '70s, attempting to combine his political energies with his psychological training, he helped found the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, where he was involved in developing a form of psychological therapy he described in a book, *Surplus Powerlessness*. Then he founded *Tikkun*. "This is not the Nation with a Jewish star," he told me. "We are serious about Jewishness in a very deep way. We are not coming to Judaism out of liberalism but to liberalism out of Judaism."

The Judaism, then, is a countercultural observance in which the notion of redemption becomes paramount. The liberalism is thus oddly unliberal—slightly messianic and apocalyptic. It is consistent with New Left ideas but chastened by the experiences of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism many Jews had in the "Movement." In Lerner's case, and in the case of many at the conference, this Jewish leftism is accompanied by the countercultural notion of psychological transformation partly derived from Herbert

Marcuse, whom Lerner considered a close friend: namely that under current political conditions personalities are contorted and distorted. The political reformation would be accompanied by a personal reformation, a rebirth in which pain and ugliness would be transformed into pleasure and love. In Lerner's view, Judaism would itself move far beyond the legal systems of rabbinic rulings and community regulation that served it until the Enlightenment, far beyond the various orthodoxies and assimilations that have marred its history ever since. "Judaism," Lerner said, "is the metaphysics of revolutionary transformation and healing."

Though this cosmically medicinal vision was the motivating force at the conference and behind the magazine itself, it was not as unifying as it first seemed. First of all, for most Jewish intellectuals, Judaism has become little more than a cultural fact. Unlike some groups on the religious right in both Israel and the United States, which treat the political realm as if it should be an extension of the religious, the left has generally treated these realms as contradictory, or worse. There was some palpable discomfort in evidence at the overtly religious material at the conference; I heard several intellectuals of assimilated temperament wryly contemplate conversion. At a dinner honoring three senior figures of the left these tensions were particularly pungent.

Grace Paley, for example, punctuated her talk with references to the Bible and tentatively used the Hebrew word "midrash," but only to imply that Judaism's fulfillment was in secular socialism. She also attacked Israel for not realizing that ideal. "This seems a waste of nationhood, a waste of statehood," she said, casually writing the country off as unsuited to her ideological predispositions. Alfred Kazin also interpreted Judaism as a sort of secular gesture of "opposition"—against the "intellectually dissolute" movement of neoconservatism. Irving Howe was still more sweeping. His political disagreements with members of the Jewish community led to a wholesale condemnation of American Jewish religious life as a "life malformed," marred by "moral erosion." But he also attacked the conference itself, arguing that there is no sanction in Jewish religion for liberal politics. "To claim there is a connection," he said, "can lead to parochial sentimentalism or ethnic vanity"—both of which he obviously felt in evidence.

THE HOPE WAS that at least on one subject there could be a mobilization of forces—Israel. The conference took place just a week after the United States decided that Yasir Arafat was serious as he mouthed the correct formulas for acceptance of Israel, and this was a matter of great debate, yielding all manner of display and argument—everything from *Tikkun's* call for a "demilitarized" and "neutral" Palestinian state, to Edward Said's demand that American Jewish intellectuals take responsibility for Israel's unmitigated sins.

One of the goals *Tikkun* set for such discussion was to break an alleged monopoly over the presentation of American Jewish ideas on Israel. The claim was that the "main-

stream" organizations make it seem as if American Jews completely support Israeli government policy, and that a dissenting voice needs to be heard. In fact, not only has such dissent been widely expressed by "mainstream" organizations themselves, but beginning in 1977 with the election of Likud it has been almost impossible to read an article about American Jewish attitudes to Israel that isn't about dissensions and differences.

At the conference it became clear that there is no unanimity even on a dissenting position. During all three days of the conference, copies of a modestly phrased statement circulated calling for Israeli negotiations with the PLO. The document was unavoidable for anyone who attended the major sessions and was posted on the major bulletin board. Yet out of the more than 1,800 conference attendees, only 300 or so actually signed it as requested. At the last session there was some thought about adopting it as a statement by the conference. But its supporters decided first to vote on whether or not the document should even be brought up for discussion. When there was substantial opposition, the entire motion was withdrawn, leaving an unsettled feeling that lasted even through the final refrain of "Hine Ma Tov."

SO WHATEVER *tikkun* was taking place seemed barely to help the shattered vessels of the Jewish left. The problem was not just strategic; it was intellectual. The conference was defining itself in opposition to the neo-conservatives, but this was a strange opposition, for it followed no serious attempt to understand the opposition or portray it accurately. Some speakers, David Twersky, Paul Berman, Michael Walzer, and David Bromwich, were circumspect, careful in their comprehension of opponents. But they were the exceptions. In most of the attacks, it seemed as if no one had dared read *Commentary* to find out what was actually being said in its pages. This method of opposition turns politics into a mere assertion of faith and opposition into a mere assertion of heresy.

Tikkun's claim is that it is not engaged in such a pious pose at all. At the conference, representatives from the magazine urged the left to learn lessons from the right, to speak about the breakdown of ethics, the absence of spirituality, crises in families, the importance of religion. But consider Lerner's own social theory. Whenever he saw patients at his institute or examined left-wing political movements, he found people in despair, blaming themselves for their failures. Lerner believes that "the 1970s and '80s in the U.S. were dominated by this belief that the individual had only him/herself to blame if s/he faced a life that was unfulfilling." In fact, he argues, the blame should rest not on the individual but on the "system" that is perpetuated by encouraging self-blame. That system requires nothing less than "structural change."

Despite a few idiosyncratic Marcusean twists, this argument replaces individual responsibility with blame on insidious forces in a capitalist society. But this view of the individual and society is neither Jewish nor truly liberal. Individual responsibility for acts and for their conse-

quences is almost an obsession of the rabbis; it is also the foundation of a truly liberal belief in human reason and its workings in society. *Tikkun's* appeal to religion is an admission that politics is not all-powerful for curing human problems. But its appeal to notions of individual innocence and society's ultimate blame is evidence that politics can be an even stronger religion than religion itself.

What then, of the claim that there is something intrinsically liberal about Judaism? On the face of it, this is not absurd. Judaism has fairly consistently been a "this-worldly" religion, creating a kingdom of deeds, with relationships not based upon absolute authority but on covenant and community. There are strong historical reasons for a connection between liberalism and post-Enlightenment Judaism as well. But as Irving Kristol has pointed out, there are also, throughout the Jewish tradition, a strong counterbalance to liberalism in the texture of the law, a conserva-

tive regard for text and its interpretation, and constraints placed upon religious and political apocalypticism. This doesn't mean that there is any natural link between Judaism and conservatism either. The claim of any intrinsic connection between politics and religion can only lead to a distortion of both.

Left-wing politics has no choice but to defend itself on secular grounds. "Leftist politics have always been very easy," Walzer said in the most memorable speech of the conference. "The vision of the future has always been comfortable." But, he continued, he can provide no "uplift," given the experience of the last few decades. Problems have become more complicated than simple left-wing formulas can solve. "We must worry about where we are going and how to get there." So this democratic socialist could only offer in place of *tikkun* a "radical uneasiness," which was just the sense the conference created.

Metternich they ain't.

BLIND MEN'S BLUFF

BY MORTON M. KONDRACKE

GEORGE BUSH hadn't been in office two weeks before the Washington-New York foreign policy establishment started buzzing and grouching about his new team and wondering whether, at a time when America needs a strategy as never before, the Bushies know what they're doing. Career foreign service officers complained that their new boss, Secretary of State James Baker, had thrown a lavish soiree for 30 news correspondents and their wives—"kissing the ass of the press," said one FSO—while ignoring the professionals. Various think tank experts said that Baker was slow in appointing ambassadors and assistant secretaries. And he was said to be secluding himself behind a "Berlin Wall"—the steel security doors of the seventh-floor executive corridor at State—along with a tight coterie of young loyalists who have limited foreign policy experience.

Meanwhile, the story went, Baker was already losing policy power to national security adviser Brent Scowcroft. Scowcroft, according to the *New York Times*, was rapidly staffing up the NSC with seasoned veterans, was giving authoritative-sounding television interviews, and, with NSC deputy Robert Gates, was assigned by Bush to chair the highest-level policy committees. "Brent already has more power than Henry Kissinger or Zbigniew Brzezinski had at this stage," one prominent foreign policy expert said. Another said, "It's obvious, Baker is going to be neither prime minister nor vicar of foreign policy." The Pentagon,

meanwhile, was completely out of the action, as Defense Secretary-designate John Tower underwent scrutiny that seemed sure to diminish his clout if he's finally confirmed.

While the establishment has been enjoying its gossip about the location of power within the new administration, it's been worrying about whether Bush's team is capable of the kind of global vision the times seem to call for. The Soviet Union, after all, is redefining relations not just with the United States, but with Europe, China, Japan, and the Middle East. And the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons, ballistic missiles, and even nuclear weapons in the Third World makes it clear that U.S. national security no longer can be defined strictly as a game between East and West. Meanwhile, America's relative economic strength continues to wane as the Pacific Rim economies grow, and the prospect of a Fortress Europe after 1992 raises the possibility that the world will someday be divided among a few giant economic blocs. If so, where will the United States fit in? In short, as a former high-ranking official in the Ford administration put it, "There is a lot of flux going on in the world."

The big question now being asked is whether the new administration has, or is even close to having, a master plan worthy of the new world. Does James Baker or Brent Scowcroft have clear ideas about what the world should look like ten or 20 years from now, and about how to nudge it in that direction? Or, more to the point, is either of them

Let's End the Isolation of the Secular Left from the Religious Left

Few on the secular Left understand the social dimensions of the Gospel, and the way the Catholic bishops, in their recent pastoral letters, placed economic democracy on the national agenda and nuclear disarmament on the nation's conscience. Few have paid much attention to the progressive social witness of Protestants. Few know what Christian activists are doing in Latin America, South Africa, South Korea, and in the ghettos and barrios of our land. Few realize that the papacy has called for workers' ownership and self-management and that its economic views have acutely irritated apologists for big business. Few have considered the role of believers in the opposition to nuclear weapons and U.S. belligerence in Central America, and in the pro-democratic dissident movements in the East bloc.

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW — an ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics, and written and read not only by Catholics, but by Protestants, Jews, Eastern Orthodox, and even nonbelievers — believe it's time for progressives of all persuasions to inquire into the sources of resilience, energy, and social passion found among religious progressives. We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments that yield humane social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as St. Francis, Gandhi, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Tawney, Schumacher, Mou-

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up to the task? After all, administration skeptics note, neither one has ever been confused with Klemens von Metternich. Baker has no experience in foreign policy per se, and Scowcroft, though he's held his present job before, is known as a problem solver, not a master strategist, and his most enduring intellectual contributions (e.g., a window of vulnerability fix) have come in the area of defense policy, not foreign policy.

The vision problem is made more acute by the fact that Mikhail Gorbachev does have a vision—or, at least, has convinced much of the world that he has one. His spaceship-earth platform has played well before audiences planetwide. Many of the administration's kibbitzers are concerned that Gorbachev is stealing a march on the United States—establishing his own popularity in Europe, diminishing the alliance's sense of threat, and getting ready to outmaneuver and isolate the United States and Israel in the Middle East. "This bunch thinks it can get away studying the issues and being reactive," one former top career diplomat said. "They say, 'Gorbachev is on the mound throwing 70 or 80 pitches a day. We can pick and choose what to hit.' They don't have a strategy, but they aren't worried. But I worry that if we're too reactive, we'll get surprised and end up throwing our weight around. I worry that no one in this crowd has it in him to do the long-term thinking we need, and that those who maybe do—Larry Eagleburger [deputy secretary of state-designate], for example—will inevitably get caught up in day-to-day crises."

ON ALL COUNTS—from personnel and organization to policy and strategy—the administration's all-purpose answer indeed is: don't worry, we're working on it. Baker, Scowcroft, and their aides make a strong case on the small issues of appointments and reorganization. On the big issues—the Soviet Union, the Pacific Rim, the Mideast—officials describe some new lines of thinking that make one half-believe that the administration is not as visionless as critics fear. That's a far cry, however, from having a careful worked-out strategy that's ready to put into play.

The complaining inside the State Department has already begun to die down. (Though not before one of Baker's inner circle overheard some FSOs griping about him in an elevator and told them, "I hope you guys are more discreet overseas than you are here.") Baker brought in a dozen or so senior foreign service officers for chats, promised them plum ambassadorships abroad, and assured them that while he plans not to be captured by "the building," as many of his predecessors have been, he still respects the professionals for their expertise. Three FSOs already have been named to top diplomatic posts that usually go to political appointees—the United Nations, Japan, and Mexico—and more such postings are yet to be announced, possibly including NATO, Italy, Argentina, and the European Community.

Still, it's true that Baker has adapted his loyalist-dominated Treasury Department management style to the State Department. He's given power, and offices close to his own, to spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler, Undersec-

tary of State Robert Kimmitt, counselor Robert Zoellick, and policy planning chief Dennis Ross, all of whom are in their 30s or early 40s, plus Eagleburger, 58, the only professional diplomat of the lot. Baker angrily disputes any dismissal of his close aides as "novices," however, pointing out that once they were novices in the White House, Treasury, and presidential campaigns, and mastered their tasks. And, Baker's defenders note, State also will have the services of experienced diplomats Richard Burt, as chief arms negotiator, and FSO Reginald Bartholomew, former ambassador to Lebanon and a skilled bureaucrat, as undersecretary for security assistance.

To charges that Baker's been slow getting appointees named, aides say FBI checks and White House personnel processes have delayed official nomination of 30 officials already OK'd by the president, including the assistant secretaries for Asia (Richard Armitage, a Pentagon official under Reagan), Latin America (Democrat Bernard Aronson), and the Middle East (John Kelly, former ambassador to Lebanon). Nominations for Africa and Europe have been delayed by internal debates.

SURELY THE least plausible nightmare of the foreign policy establishment is that Scowcroft and Baker will turn into archrivals and dissipate the administration's energy in a tong war. Both Baker and Scowcroft say they worked together closely on the administration's first foreign policy directive, which assigned Scowcroft and Gates chairmanship of Cabinet-level and deputy-level interagency policy committees while giving State control of interagency studies on various geographic areas. Baker and Scowcroft also agree on their respective responsibilities: Baker is to be the president's chief foreign policy-maker, spokesman, and diplomat. Scowcroft is to be the "honest broker" between agencies on policy proposals and coordinator of policy implementation. Scowcroft says the national security adviser "should operate from the wings, not center stage—though that doesn't mean I have to be invisible." When Scowcroft goes on television, it's by prior arrangement with Baker. He's free to see foreign ambassadors, but expected to tell Baker about it.

"They have a 'no secrets' arrangement," one State Department aide said. "When one of them talks to Bush about something, the other one knows about it." Also, he said, "They have a great personal relationship. They traveled all over the country together in 1976," when Scowcroft was Ford's NSC adviser and Baker was his presidential campaign manager. What's more, even though Baker is not an old hand at diplomacy—he is a master at acquiring and maintaining power, and he's George Bush's best friend. He's not about to be done out of the authority of his office—"I didn't come to town on a hay wagon," Baker says—and Scowcroft, for his part, is not hungry for personal acclaim. Outsiders who insist on seeing the NSC-State relationship as a repeat of Kissinger's emasculating William Rogers or Brzezinski's battling with Cyrus Vance don't know the two new players.

Although Scowcroft's appointees are experienced foreign policy hands and have been able to get started on their work faster than some State Department officials (who require Senate confirmation), there are close interrelationships between officials at the NSC and State. Robert Blackwill and Richard Haass, top NSC aides for Europe and the Mideast, both worked for Richard Burt at State in the Reagan administration, for example, and Haass worked in the Bush campaign with Dennis Ross, who will oversee Middle East policy, among other things, at State. Scowcroft and Eagleburger are both protégés of Henry Kissinger. Another key actor in Bush policy-making is likely to be Paul Wolfowitz, who was chief of policy planning and the Asia bureau at State under Reagan and is designated to be undersecretary for policy at the Pentagon under Bush. There are bound to be fights between the Pentagon and State over arms control and technology transfers to the East bloc, but Wolfowitz's ties to State may dampen them. In sum, according to Brzezinski, "Across the board, this is the best team in several decades. Every other team has had a star or two, but it had weak spots that diminished its effectiveness or it was divided against itself. This is a solid, experienced team with shared centrist, tough-minded policy views."

NEVERTHELESS, without a strategic star of the Kissinger-Brzezinski stripe, what is the team going to do besides conduct studies and field crises? What's its vision? Arguably, the United States this year needs a new global strategy more than it has at any time since the late 1940s, when George Kennan invented containment and George Marshall and Dean Acheson put it into effect. One of Bush's top foreign policy advisers, conceding the breadth of the changes afoot in the world, said, "Our vision is not going to be as sweeping as Acheson's might be. It will be more prosaic and pedestrian, perhaps, but perhaps more attainable. You have to work with the people you have around. We do have some people with innovative ideas. They're not well known, some of them are younger people. But that doesn't mean they can't have imaginative visions."

Lacking a single, dominant long-range strategist, the administration is trying to generate vision by committee. Scowcroft and Gates have started several major policy reviews designed to describe the situation the nation would like to face five or ten years from now—in U.S.-Soviet relations, nuclear weaponry, U.S.-European relations, South Asia, and Central America, for example—and to map backward to devise the methods of getting there. The nuclear study, in which Scowcroft plans to involve Democratic defense strategist (and fellow Midgetman-missile backer) James Woolsey, is expected to delay the resumption of U.S.-Soviet arms talks for several months. The Europe study, one aide said, might be so visionary as to consider whether the United States wants to work toward a "small Europe" on the 1992 model, or a "big Europe" stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals, or even a "grand community" including the United States. This official admits, "The vision is pretty fuzzy." Other Bush de-

fenders contend that no new master plan is needed—that, so long as the Soviets continue to scale down their expansionist ambitions, and the Communist world keeps moving toward free markets and political reform, there will be no cause to doubt the continued effectiveness of the old master plan.

On a less grand scale, State Department and NSC officials have talked about several new initiatives, including extension of the Canada-U.S. free trade pact into a wider North American pact including Mexico; a set of new institutional links—commercial, environmental, and political—between Asia and the United States like those that bind the United States and Europe; a full-scale "partnership" agreement with Japan covering trade, military burden-sharing, and economic assistance; and efforts to enlist the Soviet Union (and also the European allies) in solving regional conflicts in Central America and the Middle East.

In the Middle East, for example, informed outsiders say that Dennis Ross and aide Aaron Miller at State and Richard Haass at the NSC have a plan—to be launched as soon as conditions are ripe—for inviting the Soviets into Mideast peacemaking, and asking them to recognize Israel, stop insisting on an international peace conference, and instead persuade the PLO to grant negotiating power to West Bank Palestinians. Meanwhile, the United States will work on Israel to negotiate with West Bankers aligned with the PLO. Israel will be warned that if it won't conduct such negotiations, it will be increasingly isolated, as Europe, the Soviets, the Arabs, and the American press and public increasingly demand concessions.

In Central America, similarly, there is talk about getting the Soviets to call Cuba and Nicaragua off of their plans to spread revolution to El Salvador and elsewhere. Meanwhile, the administration wants to re-establish a bipartisan Central America policy so that Communists in the region can't play Congress against the administration and undermine U.S. policy in El Salvador as in Nicaragua.

THESE IDEAS imply a drastically changed relationship with the Soviet Union—one of collaboration, for which the Soviets will want something in return. What the United States is prepared to pay isn't decided, though it's likely to include an easing of trade and credit sanctions. In fact, it isn't even decided if the United States wants to pay anything. That's the problem. This administration hasn't decided the big questions yet. And when it gets them figured out, it still has to decide how to mesh its answers in one area with those in another. That's what strategy is all about. It's not true, as some critics say, that this administration is playing "catch it as it comes" diplomacy. The policy isn't purely reactive. But there's no obvious Kissinger and certainly no Metternich in Bush's entourage, either. Administration insiders say—and they ought to know—that Kissinger, too, made a lot up as he went along and made it look preplanned afterward. If the administration is lucky, it will have time to think things through. If there are preoccupying crises, though, we're in trouble. □

BOOKS AND THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Late Winter Roundup

Jacknife. In the high Hollywood days, stars squabbled constantly with studios over scripts that were assigned to them. Usually the studio won the dispute because of its long-term contract, and the star had to do the script. What's Robert De Niro's excuse?

Obviously every star, including those less talented than De Niro, makes poor

Jacknife
(Cineplex Odeon)

Her Alibi
(Warner Bros.)

Three Fugitives
(Buena Vista)

I'm Gonna Git You Sucka
(United Artists)

choices from time to time. But often we can see the objective that was flubbed. Though *Ishtar* towers as one of the arch-flubs of the century, Warren Beatty and Dustin Hoffman clearly wanted to make an eccentric, carefree comic romp. But Stephen Metcalfe's script for *Jacknife* is a muddled attempt to bowl one right down the middle of the alley that doesn't even decisively choose its alley.

The old-time stars were often proved right about the scripts they wanted to decline, but the current freedom of the "independent" star hasn't markedly raised the level of choices. With De Niro, a new film doesn't make us wonder whether he himself will be good—he almost always is—but whether he has chosen a clinker.

Here he plays a Vietnam veteran who looks up a Vietnam buddy, Ed Harris, in the town where De Niro now lives. Harris, a truck driver, is wallowing in torpor and drink; De Niro, an auto mechanic, tries to rev up his former buddy with fishing trips and general bonhomie. Hovering behind their story is the figure of a dead buddy of theirs, who was killed in a combat rescue attempt.

To complicate the veterans' drama, De Niro and Harris's sister, Kathy Baker, fall in love.

Remotely the film suggests a possible drama of Vietnam veterans struggling against the traumas of both their war experience and their cool reception at home—not a new subject but a relevant one. Metcalfe seems to purr with such glee at having chosen this subject that it lulls him into triteness. Everything about his script is trite: the dialogue, characters, dilemmas, climax. Even the chief structural fault—the delay in settling on the real point of the film—is trite. So is the tacked-on happy ending. (Metcalfe's misspelling of the title is apparently deliberate: one "k" is purposely omitted.)

Harris gives one of his best performances: he looks for the real man under all the predictable drinking-as-solace and glass-smashing. Baker is a genuine actress, whose instincts wrestle with her TV-straitened role. Though De Niro is certainly good, his vigor and explosiveness seem old reliable. De Niro qualities rather than the specifics that the other two bring to their performances.

The director was David Jones, the Englishman who is rightly admired in the theater and who did the fine film of Pinter's *Betrayal*. Except for what he contributed to the actors, Jones's work here is dull.

Well, there's always tomorrow. We tell ourselves.

Her Alibi. Tomorrow and tomorrow for Bruce Beresford, too, I hope. This gifted Australian directed one of the best American films in recent years, *Tender Mercies*. Here he handles a dreadful script in a completely indifferent way. We can understand his lack of interest, but why is he involved in this mess?

Charlie Peters wrote it: it's one more mystery plot involving a man who writes mysteries. Passages from

the hero's books are read on the sound track as we see the somewhat less epic adventures that are the base of his fantasies. The author gets involved with a Romanian woman (beautiful, of course), accused of murder (innocent, of course), and with nasty Romanian agents in this country who want to kill her.

If she were less beautiful, we might wish that the agents would succeed early so we could all go home. But she is played by Paulina Porizkova, who brightened up the dreary *Anna* and whose face is best known from the Estée Lauder ads. Porizkova is so lovely that we not only don't want her to be killed, we want her to live forever—at the same age. Besides, she isn't devoid of talent. Tom Selleck, who plays the author and tries to seem as young as the role, has a tougher time demonstrating talent.

Three Fugitives. In the 19th century a great source of English-language plays was France. Adaptations of proven Paris successes were easier and cheaper to get than new—and riskier—plays at home. Nowadays there are small echoes of that process in the American remaking of

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Lawrence of Arabia. Hurry. Only limited engagements for the restored and re-recorded reissue of David Lean's overwhelming epic. A wonderful cast, headed by Peter O'Toole (at 28). A wonderful experience. (Reviewed 2/20/89)

Pelle the Conqueror. Like a fine old-fashioned novel (which it was). A boy's growth on a Danish farm, c. 1890. Everything is well done, especially Max von Sydow's performance of Pelle's father. (1/23/89)

36 Fillette. A voluptuous 14-year-old girl (the title is a French dress size) encounters an older man. Written and directed by Catherine Breillat, whose concern is perception, not exploitation. (2/6/89)

True Believer. That neatly turned, small entertainment we all long for once in a while. A murder mystery and a legal tangle, involving a New York civil rights lawyer. (2/13/89)

SK

French films. Last year *Three Men and a Baby*. This year *Three Fugitives*. (And another is coming.)

One way of describing *Three Fugitives* is to say that the role originally played by the vital Gérard Depardieu is done here by the null Nick Nolte. That statement almost crystallizes a cultural-historical process. On the other hand, I must note that the role played here by Martin Short, a likable chipmunk of an actor, was originally played by Pierre Richard, one of the worst comedians in screen history. I didn't see the French original, but I'm willing to assume that the exchange of actors is a draw.

The original director-author, Francis Veber, again directed here. His screenplay begins with a clever situation, the product of a French theater-film tradition that specializes in clever twists. A just-released convict, Nolte, who was in for bank robbery, is innocently entangled in a blundering amateur's bank robbery. The amateur, Short, has a small daughter, for whose sake he tried to turn crook. Hence the title.

Veber is better at beginning the script than at continuing or concluding it. Intrinsically, this picture is over after that first sequence. The rest is a hundred minutes of justification for the opening.

I'm Gonna Git You Sucka. Lately Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* and Robert Townsend's *Hollywood Shuffle*. Now this film written and directed by Keenen Ivory Wayans with himself in the lead. A new genre arises: satire by blacks of black stereotypes. Wayans doesn't direct as well as Spike Lee and he can't really act at all, but he slashes shrewdly and wittily.

He plays a returned soldier who sets out to revenge his brother's death by getting a Mr. Big, who terrorizes the town. Everything is treated satirically, even the brother's death. (Cause of death: O.G.—over-gold. Too many gold chains.) One of Wayans's sidekicks wins a Mr. Pimp contest and wears stilted shoes with a tiny aquarium, complete with goldfish, under each sole. A neighborhood sports meet includes such events as running through the street with a TV set on the shoulder, speed in stripping a car, and mugging senior citizens.

A fair crop of laughs in *Sucka*, though they're not always comfortable ones. □



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ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

The Theater of "Received Pronunciation"

In the annals of the literary trip abroad, German writers traditionally went to Rome, the English sailed for Greece, the Russians visited Paris, the French frequented North Africa. Where do American drama critics go today for cultural inspiration? Where else but to London. Tailing the jet stream, I flew to Heathrow last week to find some basis for all the happy reports that issue annually from the pens of traveling critics, hoping to banish my suspicion that English theater is the most oversold commodity since the New Look. In five days I visited seven productions on the West End, at the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, and the Royal Court. And although some of the reputedly more interesting things were not playing during my stay—Deborah Warner's experimental *Elektra* at the RSC, for example, or the avant-garde Theatre de la Complicité—I believe I saw enough to reach some rough conclusions about where English theater stands in the unending imperial reign of Mrs. Thatcher.

Though dips were evident in the level of performance, what I observed was a usually skillful execution of essentially conventional material—nothing especially brilliant or awful to shatter the confident surface of competence. London theater is consumer theater par excellence. It is organized as much for tourism and export as for the entertainment of English spectators, just as some American resident theaters are designed less to transport audiences than to transfer productions. It is a cultural convenience for a highly civilized nation that is still the most courteous, least menacing in the world—which may explain why there's so little danger on the stage. Some years ago, following a period as drama critic for the London *Observer*, I concluded that English theater was often endowed with skill, style, and intellectual insight, but rarely with emotional power or spiritual depth. I saw nothing on this trip to alter that impression.

Indeed, even the last vestiges of working-class energy associated with the Osborne revolution seem to have disappeared. Control of the stage is back in the hands of the leisured classes of Heartbreak House, if not the equestrian classes

of Horseback Hall. Referring to Shavian social categories reminds me that a linguistics expert named John Honey (a modern Henry Higgins) recently announced that the English speech of choice was once again "received pronunciation," as classically enunciated by Oxbridge graduates and BBC broadcasters. That was pretty much what I heard on the English stage.

Take the National Theatre's *Mrs. Klein* (now playing at West End's Apollo). Nicholas Wright's play about the German-Jewish psychoanalyst Melanie Klein was seriously compromised by the failure of all three actresses to exchange their British passports for foreign nationalities. Mrs. Klein was played with the hauteur of Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell, her daughter with the sangfroid of Noel Coward's Amanda, so that what was intended as an Ibsenite play about family conflict came off like a drawing-room drama in the tepid manner of Terrence Rattigan. This effort to make alien cultures conform to English style is a kind of theatrical colonialism, a variant of which I saw at the Royal Court, where *A Man With Connections*, a new Russian play by Aleksandr Gelman about the Soviet bureaucracy, was performed in Glaswegian dialect, as if the hero were an executive with a Scottish distillery.

Vanessa Redgrave had a lot of trouble with her accent in Peter Hall's production of *Orpheus Descending* at the Haymarket: her Lady Torrance sounded more Polish than Italian, but at least she was making an effort—though not enough to save the play. Tennessee Williams's study of free souls trying to survive in a bigoted Southern town is so burdened with imagery that instead of developing a clear line of action, it suffocates in claustrophobic vapors and rhetorical molasses. Blessed with the capacity to "burn down a woman" and hold his urine for 24 hours, Val Xavier, the guitar-playing hero, is also variously identified with "the fugitive kind," "something wild in the country that only the night people know," the crucified Jesus, the musical Orpheus who rescues Eurydice from Hell and the homosexual Orpheus who is torn apart by Maenads for deviant sexual behavior, a snake that sheds its skin and a bird that

never touches the ground. Buckling under the weight of often contradictory metaphors and personae, the character never managed to escape from mythology into flesh, a problem exacerbated by the performance of Jean-Marc Barr, who hardly looks strong enough to strike matches, much less burn down Vanessa Redgrave.

Maureen Stapleton was better matched with Cliff Robertson in the New York stage version, as was Anna Magnani with Marlon Brando in the movie. Both women were more convincingly Italian than Redgrave (in fact, Magnani's accent was so thick she was often unintelligible), and both previous productions were superior to the expressionist extravaganza Peter Hall has directed in London. Automobile headlights continually rake the windows of the Torrance General Store, groaning music ominously permeates the dialogue, colored lights blink on and off, so that we seem to be lost in one of Stanley Kowalski's sexual fantasies, glutted not only with Williams's verbal imagery but with Hall's visual intrusions as well. Meanwhile, the cast labors to simulate down-home Southern accents, and Redgrave makes a heroic effort to simulate physical desire for Barr. She gives a strong performance—so does Julie Covington as Carol Cutrere—but looks and sounds as if she would have been happier in a stage version of *Sophie's Choice*.

At the National Theatre, David Leveaux's production of Strindberg's *The Father* at the Cottesloe was also Expressionistic, but much more engrossing, despite a weak performance in the title role. Since *The Father*, underneath its naturalist trappings, is really a distended pathological nightmare, Annie Smart's skewed perspective set and Leveaux's shadowy apparitions were eerily appropriate. John Osborne's adaptation occasionally suffered from Colonel Blimp Anglicisms ("You'll jolly well provide for the child, take it from me"), but it's the strongest, most lyrical version of the play I know. And Susan Fleetwood's Laura was the most intelligently thought-out performance I saw in London. Tentative, retiring, cunning, subdued, she refrained from showing us the ruthless Omphale until achieving full dominance over her husband (right before he throws a lighted lamp in her face). By dramatizing the wiles that subordinated women are forced to practice, she managed to etch a subtle feminist point and make her ultimate triumph all the more compelling. If only her antago-

nist had been worthy of her prowess. Alun Armstrong's Adolphe possessed a certain durability, but more craft than intelligence, more meanness than manliness, as if he were playing Squeers in *Nicholas Nickleby*. The unbalanced conflict reinforced Jack Kroll's opinion that English theater is now distinguished more by women than by men.

Male actors fared somewhat better in the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Measure for Measure* at the Barbican, notably Roger Allam, who played Duke Vincenzio like a morbid, sickly, self-hating neurotic, and Alex Jennings, who invested Lucio with a sexually ambiguous haughtiness. It's the production that faltered. Directed by Nicholas Hytner, who comes from the visual world of English opera, it was imaginatively set (by Mark Thompson) in 1930s Vienna—a sewer of galvanized pipes, steamy bordellos, and death-row prisons. It also featured an interracial cast, a worthy social effort that, nonetheless, confused the concept. With Elbow and Froth costumed like storm troopers, and John Shrapnel playing Angelo like a Nazi *gauleiter*, it was hard to believe that the Duke would openly propose marriage to a black Isabella or that a black Claudio—having impregnated a white Hero—would be imprisoned merely for premarital sexual activity. More likely, they'd all be in concentration camps. Apart from these inconsistencies, I found the quality of verse-speaking surprisingly crude, with actors breaking rhythms and garbling vowels. This *Measure for Measure* showed all the weaknesses of updated simile production—visually handsome, erratically executed, superficially conceived.

The new plays that most intrigued me this trip were Allan Bennett's *Single Spies*, a double bill at the National about Guy Burgess and Alan Blunt, and Alan Ayckbourn's *Henceforward*. . . at the Vaudeville, a comedy that originated at Ayckbourns theater in Scarborough. The Bennett plays were essentially anecdotes, thick with irony, ambiguity, subtle allusions, sardonic intellectuality—animated by a familiar Oxbridge conviction that it is better to betray one's country than one's friends (or class). But the sharpness of the Ayckbourn play surprised me, since I had always considered him a suburban dramatist. *Henceforward*. . . doesn't quite manage to deliver the pungent social commentary it promises. It's most comfortable as a farce of manners (and a brilliant one at that). But this account of an anarchic near-future world, in which

the breakdown of civility generates a burgeoning technology of domestic security systems, has an engaging way of insinuating deft truths into uproarious situations.

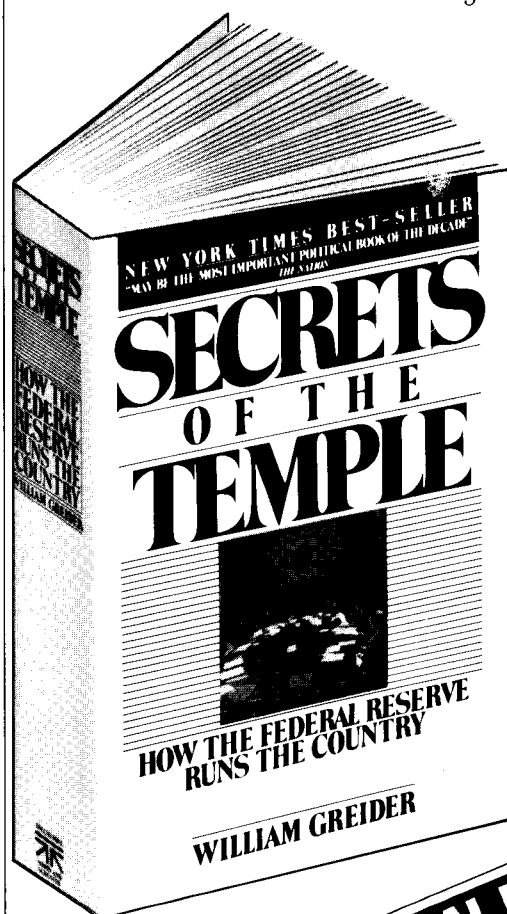
It is especially keen about the sexual vagaries of rebellious teenagers and the ruthless way artists collect material for their work. One of the reasons the play works so well is that it has been meticulously directed—by Ayckbourn himself, who has gained my respect as a genuine auteur. Apart from the imported star Ian McKellen—still overcharacterizing, though less hyperactive than usual—the cast from the Scarborough company was

impeccable, particularly Serena Evans as an agency woman hired to impersonate the protagonist's girlfriend and Jane Asher as his caustic wife (both doubling as malfunctioning female robots). Ayckbourn is apparently writing comedies now with a mind as well as a metronome, though "received pronunciation" is still the dominant music in his work.

I emphasize this problem of style and speech because it seems to me the major obstacle to free emotional flow on the British stage. The previous generation of English actors—Albert Finney, Ian Holm, Robert Stephens, Joan Plowright, Mary Ure, Rachel Roberts, Kenneth

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Haigh, Paul Rogers among them—all brought a gritty power not only to new plays but to classics, through the introduction of provincial accents and working-class rowdiness. (Part of Oliver's greatness was his capacity to enter this world as well.) Like the playwrights John Osborne and Harold Pinter, however, whose awards and income launched them into another class, many of these actors lost touch with their roots upon

achieving success and assumed the elegant accents of Garrick Club tradition. "Received pronunciation" is essential for high comedy in the Wilde-Coward-Stoppard tradition, but being designed to conceal rather than express emotion it waters down plays of any real depth. Just as accent continues to determine British class divisions, so "received pronunciation" once again dominates a conservative theater culture.

stronger than fact." (Witness the exaggerations of Amerigo Vespucci, who "had continents named after him.") But mainly Rushdie is suggesting that such fictions are the closest a secular world can get to faith. Madness and literature are our substitutes for revelation, or at least our analogues. "We can't deny the ubiquity of faith," a non-religious Indian says in Bombay. One of the imaginary archangel's dreams concerns a pilgrimage toward Mecca that depends on the promised parting of the Arabian Sea before the travelers. Do the waters part? Well, the pilgrims seem to drown, and their swollen bodies float to shore; but almost all of the witnesses to the drowning see the waters part. We can worry, in other words, about faith and its fanaticisms—Rushdie's warmest admiration goes to a man he describes as a "godly and . . . un fanatic believer," as well as to several generous unbelievers—but we cannot doubt its power.

What we can doubt is its authority. This is where Rushdie's rather top-heavy narrative machinery begins to justify itself. A revelation requires first a revealer, a dictating archangel of God; then a listener, a messenger, an interpreter. If we believe in both parties, we are the faithful. But what if we believe in only one? The character who dreams that he is Gabriel illustrates precisely this question. On the one hand, he dreams languages he does not know, and so is, perhaps, authentically inspired, if only in dreams. On the other hand, he dictates, in his dreams, both the accepted verses of the Koran and the devious, accommodating verses said to have been delivered to Muhammed by Satan. "God knows whose postman I've been," he says breezily, but anxiously.

And again, of the time when the dream-Prophet acknowledges the previous dictation to have been that of the Adversary: "Gibreel . . . knows one small detail, just one tiny thing that's a bit of a problem here, namely *that it was me both times, baba, me first and second also me.*" There are other satanic verses in the novel, cruel jingles designed to drive a man—the same Gibreel, as it happens—mad with ordinary human jealousy; but the parody effect serves to enhance the point. If the other speaks, then, if the unknown makes itself known, the decision what to call it remains ours. God and the Devil, in this light, look less like antagonists and more like lurid options that we have invented for ourselves. The difference between good and evil is real enough,

THE PROPHET MOTIVE

The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie

(Viking, 547 pp., \$19.95)

Contemporary fiction has several look-alike modes that are quite different beneath the narrative skin. Grass, Pynchon, Calvino, García Márquez, and Rushdie all deal in the extreme and the unlikely, but in each case the extremity and unlikelihood have accents of their own. In Grass, a crazy world is crazily pictured; in Pynchon, the craziness is questioned, becomes a chief topic; in Calvino, a fantastic secondary world is carefully elaborated; in García Márquez, the narrator doesn't notice anything untoward at all. Rushdie adopts all of these stances, in no particular order, and he is better at some than at others. But he also has a further specialty: the quick and crowded hallucination, the mind that is like a city, the mind that *is* a city, a population boom inside the head.

A good deal of what seems fantastic in *The Satanic Verses* is rooted in mental disorder or personal quirks within the story. A character dreams a whole series of legends, including a botched, erratic, but not unsympathetic history of the early years of Islam; dreams he is the Archangel Gabriel in person; sees the ghosts of someone else's past; waking, tries to play the archangel in modern London and discovers his fragile humanity by stepping into a stream of traffic along the Thames Embankment. The whimsical name Cone (belonging to a woman mountain-climber) turns out to be a version of the not so whimsical Cohen. The dream machinery seems clumsy to me, a rather weary narrative excuse. I think Rushdie could have done better. But the sense of breakdown in the archangel

character is vividly evoked in all its pain and anguish; and Rushdie needs his rational, psychological grounding because it answers the sheer extravagance of the other elements of his plot, the craziness in the writing, so to speak, topping the craziness of the characters.

Two characters fall 29,000 feet from an exploding airplane and land unharmed on an English beach. Their descent occupies the whole brilliant first chapter of the novel. One of them turns into a hairy, horned devil complete with cloven hooves; even the archangel often has a halo that others can see. Rushdie's narrator intervenes periodically to remind us what a strange business this art of fiction is. "It was and it was not so," he likes to say, borrowing a traditional Arabic narrative formula, "it happened and it never did." "Let's face it," he remarks, "it was impossible." He means not the fortunate fall of the two characters, but their intricate antics as they drop. They can't have talked and sung in this elaborate and exhaustive way. Then the narrator adds: "But let's face this, too: they did." *They did* means that this is a novel and anything can happen; but it also hints, more subtly, that we have already believed stranger things outside of fiction. Novels are not the favorite haunt even of miracles.

Rushdie's two orders of fictional reality—the characters' delusions and the writer's inventions—come together to raise the question of belief. Rushdie wants us to understand what he at one point calls "the terrible power of metaphor," to remember that "fantasy can be

Rushdie suggests, but it is not as total as we think. That is not exactly a new lesson, but it is always worth offering, especially in harsh and schismatic times.

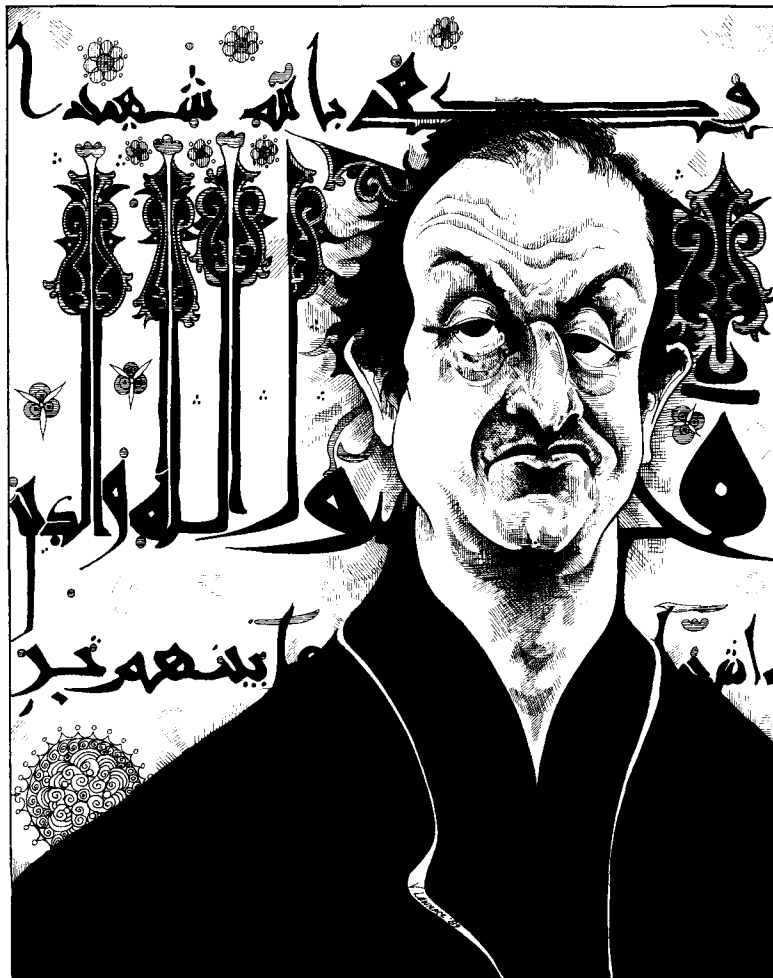
The most powerful moments in Rushdie's novel, though, have nothing to do with these high and difficult themes. A man returns to Bombay to see his father. He finds the old monster as crafty and aloof as ever, but turned religious, and morally slack into the bargain, seducing his servants from their former virtue. His house is a shoddy circus of imitations of the past. Son and father quarrel (again); much intervenes; the son returns as the father is dying, and finds the father he dreamed of but could never quite believe in. Too late, or not quite too late. "To fall in love with one's father after the long angry decades was an awesome and beautiful thing. . . ." A sentimental story? It would be one, if it were not realized with cool and telling detail. The son has come home without losing a jot of his sense of how complicated home is.

The Satanic Verses doesn't have the pace and the excitement of *Midnight's Children*, or the bitter concentration of *Shame*. There are moments when it threatens to disappear for good into one of its stately set pieces. The stories of the English lady's romance in Argentina, of Ms. Cone's climbing of Everest, of her sister's brief and glittering life, all have a strangely dutiful air, the feel of a writer trying to fill out a Big Book. But the pervading intelligence of the novel is so acute, the distress it explores so thoroughly understood, that the dullness doesn't settle, can't keep away the urgent questions and images that beset us.

This is Rushdie's most bewildered book, but it is also his most thoughtful. Its other great theme is dislocation and befuddled identity, its locus a Bombay and a London that have turned inside out and become each other. Here, for example, is what a "tropicalized"

London might look and feel like:

Improved street life, outrageously colored flowers (magenta, vermillion, neon-green), spider-monkeys in the oaks. . . . Religious fervor, political ferment, renewal of interest in the intelligentsia. No more British reserve; hot-water bottles to be banished forever, replaced in the fetid nights by the making of slow and odorous love. Emergence of new social values: friends to commence dropping in on one another without making appointments, closure of old folks'



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

homes, emphasis on the extended family. Spicier food; the use of water as well as paper in English toilets; the joy of running fully dressed through the first rains of the monsoon.

Disadvantages: cholera, typhoid, Legionnaires' disease, cockroaches, dust, noise, a culture of excess.

What is telling about this fanciful and complex passage is its evocation not only of what immigrants to Britain must miss (and what they have escaped), but also of what they might bring to their adopted culture, if that culture were less scornful of them, less frightened of them.

One of the most haunting sequences in the novel evokes a ward in a London hospital full of freaks, humans half-turned into tigers, demons, snakes, wolves, water buffalo. How has this happened? "They describe us," one of the creatures whispers. "That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct."

They are the whites in Britain. This is how Britannia still nervously rules. Half of *The Satanic Verses* tells the terrible love story of Salahuddin Chamchawala, better known as Saladin Chamcha, an Indian Anglophile whose archaic and snobbish affection for Old England, anxiously sustained while the going was good, receives only shocks and insults when his carefully constructed Englishness comes apart.

All of these things—the tropics, the hospital ward, Chamcha's disarray—are mirrored and twisted in the scandal surrounding Rushdie's novel in England. The book has been publicly burned in Bradford, withdrawn from bookstores, made the subject of a mass protest march. It is about to be taken up in parliamentary debate. (It also has been banned in India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa.) Why? Because it is said to blaspheme against Islam, and to insult the already much insulted Muslim community in Britain. But it can't blaspheme, because only be-

lievers can blaspheme, as Rushdie himself says in the novel, and this is a novel about doubt. (We may well wonder, as Rushdie did in an eloquent article in the *Observer*, why a supposedly civilized and modern country is considering extending its blasphemy laws instead of abolishing them.) The book doesn't insult, either; but we are deep in the hospital ward here, and skins are understandably thin.

Yet the good liberal doctors who tell the patients that it's all right to be half-human may do more harm than the bigots who put the poor, colluding freaks in the ward in the first place. And the pa-

tients who don't collude, who don't feel themselves to be freaks, seem to think that they can keep their human dignity by being untouchable. Or, to put it differently, a great wave of fundamentalism, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, even secular, if we think of recurring appeals to "traditional values," is muddling issues all over the place.

The Satanic Verses is certainly irreverent; and it is not always funny enough to lift its irreverence into satire or speculation. But consider one of the most offending passages, the story of a brothel called *The Curtain*, the *Hijab*, in which the faithful can pretend to be the Prophet and sleep with courtesans who have taken the names and manners of the Prophet's 12 wives. It is brilliantly realized, a fine flight of comic, troubling, skeptical imagination, a moment worthy of Grass or García Márquez, or, to get a little closer to the source, of Genet. The story is surely in appalling taste. But that

is its point. It casts no slur at all on religion. It comments wittily, instead, on the backsliding and the all too human material that religion has to work with.

Only edgy or beleaguered or tyrannical people take irreverence as insult. We should ask not what Rushdie has done to the Muslims in Britain. We should wonder, rather, what Britain has done to them, to make them so eager to turn their (admittedly mischievous) friend into their scapegoat. If they had read Rushdie's novel, they would have learned that the solemn religious respect that they want (and that he lacks) is the first step to the ghetto. Ghettos are made partly of unquestioned orthodoxies, partly of prejudice masked as tolerance. Tropical London is a lot more attractive than that.

MICHAEL WOOD

Michael Wood is professor of English at the University of Exeter.

Paul de Man, 36 years old, presented himself as the son of Henri de Man. He claimed that the accusation against him was due to the hostility that the name of his "father"—whom he was careful to present only as a former minister and a political leader with a "controversial" past—still aroused in various Belgian circles. In truth, however, Henri de Man was not Paul de Man's father. He was his uncle and his godfather.

When a man claims another man for a father, he must feel, in some sense, like a son. Paul de Man's letter to the Society observes about Henri de Man,

I certainly am in no position to pass judgment on him, but I know that his mistakes were made out of a lack of machiavellism and not out of lack of devotion to his ideals. He did what he thought best for his country and his beliefs, and the final evaluation of his acts is a matter of history.

There is sentiment and sympathy in those lines. Paul de Man may indeed have felt a filial affinity for Henri de Man. His wartime journalism was conceived precisely in the spirit of the man he falsely called his father. It is very curious that this blatant lie passed unnoticed. "I am certainly in no position," he concluded in the letter, protesting that he was the innocent victim of slander, "to ask the Society of Fellows for anything but a chance to prove the truth of what I have stated in this letter." That should pose quite a challenge for de Man's unconditional defenders.

The outburst of feeling in American academic circles caused by the discovery of de Man's wartime writings reveals the magnitude of the emotional difficulties that result when the realities of the 1940s are confronted. The case of Paul de Man is important, in the end, because it is an example. De Man is an instructive illustration of a major phenomenon of European history during the interwar period: the rejection of the democratic order by a large part of the intellectual elite. This respected and admired individual, a major thinker and a charismatic scholar of great authority, participated during his youth in a great movement of revolt against the whole of the liberal, individualistic, and humanist political culture based on the theory of natural rights and the principles of the French Revolution.

Judging by the quantity of articles collected here, and by the quality of the critical dossier that accompanies them, one might think that the journalistic career of Paul de Man was a phenomenon of exceptional complexity. A close look, how-

THE MAKING OF A PROPAGANDIST

Wartime Journalism, 1939-43

by Paul de Man

edited by Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz, Thomas Keenan

(University of Nebraska Press, 399 pp., \$35, \$15.95 paper)

Responses on Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism

edited by Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz, Thomas Keenan

(University of Nebraska Press, 477 pp., \$40, \$19.95 paper)

The great de Man debate that recently divided the American academic community has now led to the appearance of two large volumes, useful and well produced. The editors of Paul de Man's *Wartime Journalism, 1939-43* have gathered together, in facsimile, the whole of his journalistic production as far as it is known. The texts published in *Le Soir*, the great Belgian newspaper that, against the will of its owners, was placed at the service of German propaganda in occupied Belgium, are given in the original. The texts published in the Flemish journal *Het Vlamsche Land* in 1942, far less numerous, are accompanied by an English translation. Thus the reader may judge, for the first time, from documentary evidence. The companion volume, *Responses on Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism*, brings together some new contributions to the debate, and several of

these are excellent. (It is regrettable, though, that the editors did not include, in addition to Jacques Derrida's essay, which was already published elsewhere, Geoffrey Hartman's fine "Blindness and Insight," which appeared in these pages.)

There are some interesting documents in the companion volume, most notably the letter that Paul de Man wrote to the Society of Fellows at Harvard, to which he had been nominated, in January 1955. As a result of rumors about his past, de Man was forced to give an account, for the first and last time in public, of his activities during the war years. This tearful and undignified text is deserving of a real character study. It is extraordinary, because it is based on a brazen lie.

In order to move the Harvard authorities, who seem to have asked him for the moral equivalent of a sworn declaration,

ever, shows the opposite. Considered in their context, de Man's youthful writings appear to be extremely banal. Many other intellectuals and civil servants went further along the same lines and did things far worse, but their writings never prevented them from making a great career in the postwar period. They became part of the intellectual and political establishment, the friends of princes and the counselors of the mighty. Georges Albertini, for example, one of the great names of collaborationism, the secretary general of Marcel Déat's fascist party, enjoyed an extraordinary influence under the Fourth Republic; and eventually he became a prominent member of Pompidou's entourage. Similarly, Jean Jardin, Pierre Laval's close associate and his Cabinet chief of staff, rose to become the *éminence grise* behind some of the most powerful French politicians of the '50s and the '60s. The super-collaborators Marcel Jouhandeau, a notorious and vicious anti-Semite, and Jacques Chardonne, the author of vitriolic articles in 1940, were propelled soon after the Liberation to the forefront of the Parisian literary scene.

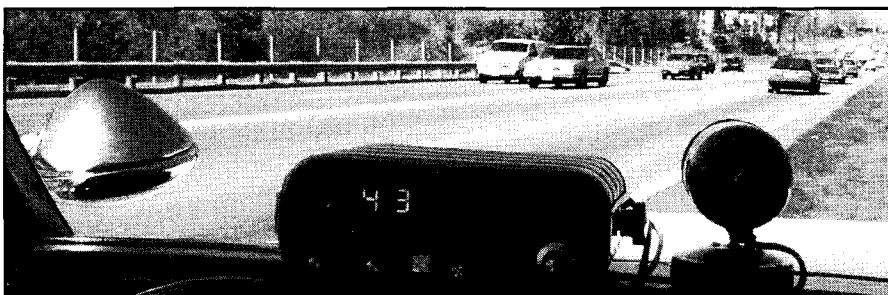
What would remain of the Académie Française if it were to be purged of all its members who had made anti-Semitic statements? What would be left of the universities, the press, the arts, the theater, the cinema, if all those who had sung the glories of the National Revolution or worse were removed? In this sense, Jacques Derrida's feeling of injustice in the face of the storm surrounding his dead friend is not entirely unjustified. Except that the famous cynicism of the Latin Quarter, at once sophisticated and ingenuous, by which Watergate has always been ridiculed, for example, as an example of Yankee naïveté or hypocrisy, has not yet entirely penetrated American intellectual life; and Paul de Man chose to live and to work in the United States.

FOR THE historian, de Man's ideas and actions are interesting precisely for their ingenuousness. The ideas of this young journalist reflected something important: a confrontation between two rival political traditions that fought each other in the French intellectual sphere of influence throughout the period between the two world wars. At the end of the 19th century, a second tradition developed in France, which rebelled against the classical universalistic heritage, against rationalism, humanism, and liberalism. This second tradition, particularistic and organicist, was often char-

acterized by a local variant of the biological and racial nationalism of *volkisch* Germany. Philosophically, it represented a total rejection of the vision of man and society developed from Hobbes to Kant, from the English revolutions of the 17th century to the time of the French Revolution. The attack on the philosophical foundations of liberal democracy extended to an attack on its institutions and structures, too. But liberalism was not all that was denounced: this was a revolt not only against all the "material-

istic" foundations of the established order, but also against historical materialism, against the basic postulates of Marxist economics and the intellectual foundations of Marx's thought.

This alternative tradition was undeniably a minority tradition. But minorities also have influence: they pose questions, they raise problems, and they condition, no less than the majority, the intellectual climate of a period. Contrary to the conventional historical wisdom, this alternative tradition was far from being a



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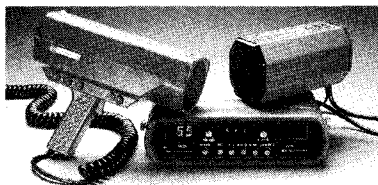
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marginal ideology in the culture of the French-speaking countries in the 20th century. Indeed, its influence on many modes of thought was considerable. It permeated society to a far greater extent than is generally admitted. More important, this minority knew how to await its hour. In France and in Belgium, but particularly in France, its hour came with the collapse in June 1940.

As long as conditions of peace and relative stability prevailed, this alternative tradition could not attempt to remold society. After the defeat in 1940, however, the ideology that had infiltrated society for half a century rose to the surface and assumed control. There was a tremendous effort of intellectual, moral, and political renewal in France and in Belgium, where the fashions of the south are always watched with interest. After all, in those days Brussels was, far more than today, a city directly connected to the political reality and the intellectual life of France.

That is the context in which Paul de Man must be placed. He belonged to this milieu that had waited for years for the opportunity to overthrow democracy. These men were patriots, to be sure; and some of them sincerely regretted the de-

feat of their country. I say some, because for many the choice between a Franco-Belgian victory, which would represent the triumph of the detested liberal and bourgeois democracy, and a defeat of their country, which would mean the victory of a superior political culture, based on the primacy of the collectivity, on the sense of duty and sacrifice, on hierarchy and discipline—such a choice was difficult to make. The blitzkrieg of 1940, however, saved them from having to make it. The collapse of the regime was the chance to save a decadent civilization.

One of the most prominent Belgian figures to adopt this attitude was Henri de Man, the president of the Parti Ouvrier, the Belgian Socialist Party. In France the number of famous people (or those who were to become famous after the Liberation) who took this position was great. They represented the mass of intellectuals who had deplored, in the years between the world wars, the decadence of their country, its corruption by individualism and materialism. All these rebels, wherever they came from, horrified though they may have been by the totalitarian methods of Fascist or Nazi states (there was, we should remember, a considerable difference between the two),

found it impossible not to identify with the Fascist and Nazi criticism of bourgeois society, of liberalism, of democracy, of Marxism. Intellectually they were either sympathetic or disarmed. They felt the same revulsion for a society that had lost any purpose apart from capitalist profit, and that was sunk in a sordid hedonism, a society without a transcendent aspiration, without a hope. Hence the influence of Fascism in intellectual circles beyond its own, hence its capacity to attract so many fellow travelers.

THIS WAS the background to the intellectual formation of the young Paul de Man. For this extraordinarily talented student, moreover, the background took flesh and blood form in the person of his famous uncle. Derrida, in his painstaking effort to explain de Man's past, insists on the "powerful and no doubt decisive" influence that this "exceptional" figure must have exerted on his young nephew. And indeed, Henri de Man was not just anybody: vice president of the Socialist Party and its president since 1939, he was one of the greatest socialist theorists of the period, and perhaps the most controversial. Only Gramsci and Lukács, among his contemporaries, were intellectually superior to him; but they were, unlike him, Marxists.

More than anyone else in the inter-war period, Henri de Man carried on the tradition begun by Robert Michels, that other non-conformist formed in the school of German social democracy. The pioneer of modern political science, the author of *Political Parties*, and a radical militant socialist, Michels became, in the 1920s, one of the major theorists of Italian Fascism. In the years before the Great War, Michels had been associated with Sorelian revolutionary revisionism, that is, with a peculiar anti-materialist and anti-rationalist reformulation of Marxism, which, together with nationalism, became one of the two essential components of Fascism. Henri de Man was the most authentic heir to this Franco-Italian Sorelianism.

Mussolini made no mistake, therefore, when he received the Italian translation of de Man's major work, *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*, enthusiastically. The Duce, a former leader of the Italian revolutionary left, applied himself with intelligence to demonstrate the kinship between Henri de Man's ideas and Fascist policies. For his part, de Man responded:

It is precisely because, belonging, like you, to the "generation of the front," and being

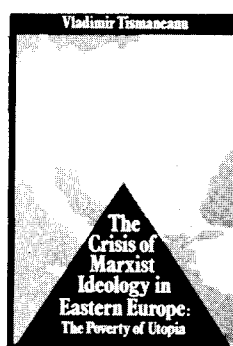
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influenced, like you, by the ideas of Georges Sorel, I do not close my mind to any manifestation of creative force, it is precisely because I am not afraid to do justice to certain organizational aspects of the Fascist enterprise, that I follow its progress with a passionate interest.

Throughout the '30s, Henri de Man advocated a national, authoritarian, corporatist form of socialism. A hatred of the plutocracy was accompanied by a violent anti-Marxism. Psychological, emotional, and affective problems had precedence, he believed, over economic questions. Aesthetics held at least as important a place in human life as economics. If one satisfied the psychological needs of the workers, one dispensed with the necessity of dealing with structural problems: that was the thrust of this socialist leader's analysis, and it was precisely the view of individual motivation on which the Fascist revolution was founded.

There were many people in the '30s who, without ever belonging to a Fascist party, approved of this revolt of the mind, of the senses, of the body. It was no accident that, on June 28, 1940, Henri de Man addressed a manifesto to his fellow socialists in which he asked them to accept the Nazi victory as the point of departure

for the construction of a new world. In September 1941, Henri de Man launched a weekly journal, *Le Travail*, to replace *Le Peuple*, the banned organ of the disbanded Socialist Party. His editorials presented lengthy criticisms of traditional socialism, democracy, and liberalism. He urged the integration of Belgium into the new European order governed by Nazi Germany. In April 1942, in occupied Paris, he gave a lecture on this theme to the "Cercle Européen," an ultra-collaborationist institution. (Contrary to what is claimed, he did not retire from public life in 1941.)

More modestly, of course, the student Paul de Man set out on the same path. The intellectual collaborator placed the written word at the service of the new order in the same way as the volunteer for the Russian front placed his strength and his physical courage. And there can be no doubt that the occupier needed intellectual collaboration no less than military or economic collaboration. Nazi Germany attached considerable importance to ideological warfare, to the indirect mobilization for the war effort.

This is generally not well understood. The propaganda services in Paris and Brussels did not encourage only vulgar collaboration, which called for people to

leave for the eastern front, or to denounce acts of resistance, or to inform on Jews in hiding. The men in charge of German propaganda, such as Otto Abetz, Friedrich Grimm, or Karl Epting, had a wonderful knowledge of the mentality of the French-speaking intelligentsia. They grasped that a coarse, low-level anti-Semitism could be counterproductive, that they needed something subtle—something of the kind that one finds, say, in the writings of Henri de Man, who observed, in 1941, in his *Mémoires*:

Convinced as I have been for a long time of the necessity of eliminating from our political organism the foreign body constituted by all the residues or embryos of the Ghetto, I am equally convinced that the problem of the protection of the race is only soluble in an orderly fashion and by means of international agreement.

At exactly the same time, Paul de Man expressed himself in a similar manner. He, too, protested against the Jewish invasion: "One cannot entertain much hope for the future of our civilization if it has let itself be invaded without resistance by a foreign force." He, too, thought that the continent should be purged of the "Semitic interference" that was to be found "in all aspects of



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European life." The "Jewish spirit," according to him, was a virus that threatened European integrity; the deportation of the Jews outside Europe would be a natural and legitimate measure of protection. And Nazi propaganda required no more.

"The Jews in Contemporary Literature" is the only anti-Semitic article by Paul de Man so far known, and it does not really amount to much. The point, however, is that it was just one of a few dozen articles by de Man with which Nazi propaganda could not have failed to be pleased. Again, this propaganda was far more sophisticated than is generally supposed. It did not require singing the praises of turning France and Belgium into satellites, into the marginal provinces of a great Aryan empire: How many Belgians or Frenchmen, apart from volunteers for the Waffen SS, would have welcomed such a future? This propaganda did better, it was more politic and more palatable, to advocate a united Europe without England, the "hereditary enemy," and completely cut off from the United States, that mercantile and basely materialistic civilization on the other side of the Atlantic, and protected from Bolshevik-Asiatic barbarism by the German war machine. It did better to speak of protecting a civilization whose existence was threatened by merchants and money-men, by agents of the City of London, by carriers of the liberal virus.

The Germans did not demand that one servilely proclaim the cultural superiority

of Germany, or of Nazism. It sufficed for them that one support European unity and analyze the reasons for the terrible defeat suffered by the oldest and greatest democracy of the European continent: that is, that one write critically of materialism, individualism, universal suffrage, political liberty, and the principles of 1789. The Germans wanted a credible propaganda. They wanted it known that the defeat of France and Belgium was not the fault of a badly commanded and ill-prepared army, or of an ineffective regime, but of a whole political culture.

This was the message of that enormous literature of the defeat that Paul de Man conscientiously reviewed, week after week, in *Le Soir* in 1941 and 1942 with a great deal of sympathy, often with admiration. These "Chroniques littéraires" were undoubtedly more moderate than many contributions to the collaborationist press, yet all the significant themes of the anti-democratic and anti-liberal revolt of the '30s were sounded in them. All the great names of the intellectual collaboration were praised: Brasillach, Drieu La Rochelle, Marc Augier, Chardonne, Jouhandeau, Alfred Fabre-Luce, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Jacques Benoist-Méchin. All those who expatiated on the sickness of a civilization corrupted by the humanist tradition were carefully brought, in the columns of this young cultural journalist, to the notice of the educated public.

De Man paid special attention to the writings of Benoist-Méchin, Fabre-Luce, and Jouvenel. But these were not writers, they were pamphleteers. Their books were purely political, fiercely polemical tracts. De Man could have plausibly concluded, if he wanted, that they had no place in a "Chronique littéraire." Instead he expounded on them at length, quoting them often, saying all kinds of good things about them: for him, these were works of the highest importance. The young de Man read a great deal, out of intellectual curiosity, but also professionally; he could not have been ignorant, in other words, of literary and political details that were known to any reader of the catalogs and the journals of the period. He must have known, for example, that in 1942, Benoist-Méchin, Fabre-Luce, and Jouvenel were among the six French authors most recommended by the *Propaganda Abteilung Frankreich*, the German propaganda services, and all three

had been translated into German. The works of these writers were valued by the Germans as prime examples of their propaganda; they were used not only to tell the French and the Belgians about the inherent weakness of liberal democracy, but also to show the Germans that it was important to sustain their efforts, that victory was near.

Other articles by de Man, no less revealing, acquainted the French-speaking reader with the new Germany, and on three occasions with Fascist Italy. All this was delivered in a style less vulgar than was the case with many other journalists; but the writer's sentiments were unmistakable. De Man even went so far as to promote booklets of propaganda in Flemish that were published in Amsterdam. Thus his readers were exposed, week after week, to all the works that the German propaganda services were trying to put before them. That was de Man's task: to put high culture at the service of a Nazi Europe. The reviewer's choice of writers alone indicated that one more young intellectual had committed himself to the great spiritual, moral, and national revolution that sought to rid Europe of its humanist tradition once and for all.

At the end of November 1942, Paul de Man's last "Chronique littéraire" appeared in *Le Soir*, and in May 1943 he ended his collaboration in *la Bibliographie Dechenne*, in which he had given eulogistic accounts of works by Fabre-Luce, Lucien Rebatet, and Pierre Daye. He retired to his paternal home (his real one) in Antwerp. In Brussels, the atmosphere had become somewhat hostile; de Man had been pilloried by students in the Resistance, who were formerly his friends.

Had his eyes been opened? Had the pressures of German censorship become intolerable, as he claimed? The credibility of Paul de Man, as we have seen, is hardly above suspicion. It is just as logical to suppose, therefore, that he simply understood that the fortunes of the war were changing. Montgomery was victorious at El-Alamein on November 3, 1942. The German defeat at Stalingrad occurred on February 2, 1943. The brilliant young critic of *Le Soir* can hardly have failed to notice.

ZEEV STERNHELL

Zeev Sternhell teaches history of ideas at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and is the author of *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (University of California Press).

TABARD AND TERRACE

In a small town with a bad museum
my wife died and her hair changed to amber,
the color of the deep scar on her lip
shaped just like a bird, safest in my mouth.

There is so much that I want to believe
it makes me wonder. Soft fields ambered
onto strings of towns. Tabards of money.
The night she lost the color of her hair

and we sat on the terrace looking down
to the sad novel of people dining.
She died and no museum will take her.
Nobody has any use for amber.

In the place I live, in the sad novel
and poorly lighted exhibition hall
of that town, the fields, people, and money
are deep scars like birds, safest in my mouth.

DONALD REVELL

GROSSNESS AND ASPIRATION

John Cheever: A Biography by Scott Donaldson

(Random House, 416 pp., \$22.50)

The Letters of John Cheever edited by Benjamin Cheever

(Simon and Schuster, 397 pp., \$19.95)

John Cheever worked hard at burnishing the image of the artist as bourgeois. "Genius did not need to be rootless, disenfranchised, or alienated," he insisted. "A writer could have a family, a job, and even live in the suburbs." Cheever's "genteel, traditional" persona was, he observed with some satisfaction, "generally accepted." The critics who discussed his work routinely treated him as a polished *New Yorker* author, the portraitist of suburban pathos. The journalists who came to profile him went away and wrote about the charming fellow, flanked by Labrador retrievers, who scribbled and swam amid Westchester comfort.

The revelation that Cheever's life was not exactly a traditional one introduced a seemingly discordant note into the portrait. The most dramatic discovery was that the family man had numerous homosexual affairs. He was also a serious alcoholic, not just an enthusiastic cocktail drinker. There were other, less shocking adjustments to the prevailing impression. The gentlemanly background that Cheever often suggested was his turned out to be untrue. His father had lost what money he had (from the shoe business) during the Depression, and his mother resorted to running a gift shop. Cheever was not born to the impressively leafy surroundings he and his family enjoyed in Westchester from the 1950s onward: they were at first renters of a modest house on someone else's grand estate, and only became owners of a house in Ossining relatively late in Cheever's mostly far from lucrative career.

Instead of a *New Yorker* writer leading a *New Yorkerish* life, Cheever suddenly was a mystery: an accomplished craftsman leading a messy, and secret, life. After numerous biographical efforts—first a memoir by his daughter, then a collection of interviews, recently a biography, and now a collection of letters edited by his son—the man still evades coherent portraiture. But that elusive life should be a

spur to reconsider the work, which is itself more of a mystery than readers tend to acknowledge. The image of Cheever the fastidious miniaturist, skilled in technique but scanty on adventurous vision, is as misleading as the image of Cheever the country husband. Both his life and his art were more "rootless, disenfranchised, and alienated" than he wanted to believe and have others believe.

It was perhaps fair to label Cheever a *New Yorker* gem polisher early on in his career, as Weldon Kees did in *THE NEW REPUBLIC* in 1943. Cheever's first collection suffered, he complained, from the superficiality that marked the magazine as a whole, where well-wrought prose was

expended on what is more often than not the essentially trivial; it would even seem that the magazine's character demands a patina of triviality spread over those themes and situations which its policy allows. Its writers must frequently entertain themselves by concentrating on the merely decorative qualities of a scene, a restriction brought on by an understandable hesitancy to explore their material deeply.

But the guilt by association lingered too long. Cheever didn't venture far from the circumscribed terrain—he turned from Upper East Side anxieties to a scrutiny of the suburbs—but he soon began treating it in unusual, unsettling ways. By the early 1960s, roughly halfway through his career, he had traveled too far from a traditional style for the magazine's taste. "His stories collided with the *New Yorker* idea of fiction," William Maxwell, Cheever's editor, told his daughter Susan Cheever. "Character as a confining force got less and less strong in his work. He extricated himself from ordinary realism." Only 11 of Cheever's stories appeared there after 1964. In his novels he turned to darker material and even more idiosyncratic narrative methods. Conventional, linear storytelling, Cheever explained in his notes for his second novel, *The Wapshot*

Scandal (1964), was suited to "express[ing] a sense of consecutiveness," but he saw a world "distinguished principally by its curvatures."

Cheever distrusted conventional notions of character and plot not just in his fiction, but also in his life. In place of coherence of identity and consecutiveness of story, he believed in—and evidently experienced—a profound disparity between an inner and outer self. With his characters and himself, he was expert at elaborating the public persona, and reticent or elliptical about the psyche within. "He did not like to talk about human emotions. He did talk, often eloquently, about human behavior," was the way his daughter put it. "[My father] focused on the surface and texture of life, not on the emotions and motives underneath."

Acknowledging the anachronism of his approach, Cheever made it sound rather like old-fashioned discretion. He lamented "the prolonged psychoanalytic conversations many of my generation experienced, where too great an emphasis was put on our motives and too little on the thrust of life. To 'mine' was the term the doctors used. . . . As I see it, the continents of motive are far away and unknown, and their coastlines are out of sight." But the effect of his often oblique treatment of his fictional characters—failing to round them out, omitting to trace actions to "realistic" causes or, for that matter, consequences—was far from old-fashioned. Instead, Cheever took his place in the company of modernists. At its best, his gaze conveyed a sense of alienation at the heart of ostensibly settled, conventional lives and a sense of disorientation about apparently well-tended places. At its less than best, it registered a disappointing flatness of scene and soul.

Cheever's obliqueness about himself was perhaps not so different, though it could at times appear simply stodgy—his evasions "reminding one once again that a WASP gentleman doesn't open his insides to casual inspection," as one frustrated interviewer, Wilfrid Sheed, wrote. In fact, his reticence seems to have been born not of confidence in his heritage, but of a feeling of spiritual homelessness he shared with his characters. Like them, he was disoriented by what he once summed up as "the conflict between grossness and aspiration" and often elaborated as a conflict between "confinement and freedom [which] is very much like Good and Evil and, to use a marvel-

ous new metaphor we now have, it's like gravity and weightlessness."

In an interview toward the end of his life, Cheever claimed a jaunty equanimity about the predicament: "That one is in conflict with oneself—that one's erotic nature and one's social nature will everlastingly be at war with one another—is something I am happy to live with on terms as hearty and fleeting as laughter." But that attitude, which he took pains to convey—it was his social, outer nature speaking—was only part of the story, to judge by the biographical evidence that has now accumulated. The whole, darker story is still far from clear: his erotic, inner nature didn't speak much, except in journals that so far have surfaced in substantial pieces only in Susan Cheever's memoir. But within the hearty Cheever, there clearly was a character off balance, a center of gravity missing. Scott Donaldson's biography and Benjamin Cheever's edition of letters—both tedious undertakings for the most part—succeed, often unwittingly, in conveying that disequilibrium.

Most of the time Donaldson is at sea among details. Here, for example, is part of a paragraph about the year the Cheevers went to Italy for a change of scene (1956-57): "Ben [Cheever's son] happily attended the Overseas School in Rome, and made friends with a Burmese boy named Ronald Ang-dighn. . . . Ben's mice were invited to appear at a Christmas party given by a family from Chicago. Most of the women in attendance were American divorcees. When everyone sang Christmas songs at the end of the evening, some of them cried."

To be fair, his technique is not always so dadaist in effect. Out of his clutter of specifics sometimes emerges a peculiar, and appropriate, sense of strangeness about Cheever's outwardly none too noteworthy life: he was an East Coast boy who came of age during

the Depression, emerged from the war with a career shakily under way and a family to support, moved to the suburbs and met with success. Yet all along there was a double edge to the ordinariness, as if Cheever were standing back and seeing it from an odd angle that exposed the eerie contingency of convention.

Donaldson's penchant for artlessly juxtaposing light and dark, mundane and dramatic, tame and torrid often con-

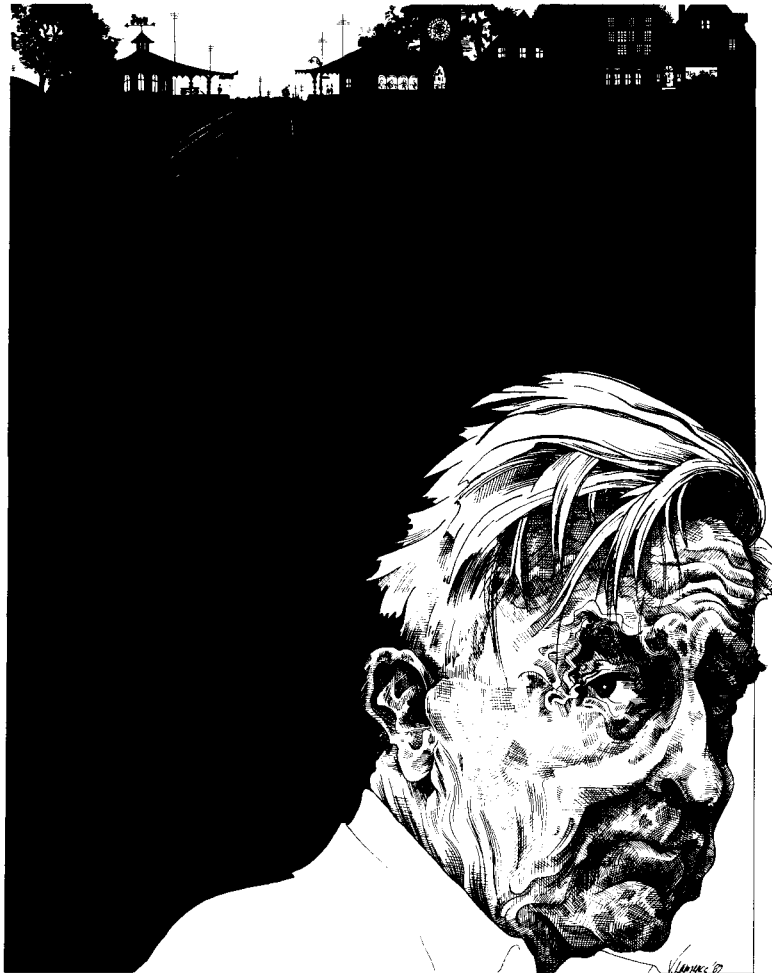
"was certainly the most gentlemanly of anyone in our group," as E. J. Kahn remembered it. "He was the sort of person you would sit next to the dreadful aunt or boring sister-in-law at dinner." Yet Cheever wrote Eleanor Clark about his persistent depression during those same years; he'd been feeling, he told her, like "an odd mixture of man and cockroach."

A similar dissociation seems to mark Cheever's feeling about his family, and especially about his wife, with whom his

relations were never easy or easy to understand—they talked repeatedly about divorce, but stayed together until the end. Writing about his house in a journal entry that Susan Cheever quotes in her memoir, Cheever touched on his ambivalence about his domestic life: "I come up against the picturesqueness of this house I own. . . . Standing in the kitchen I can see the yellow walls of the dining room, the gleaming surface of the table . . . and I find these effects offensive. It is the vitality of the landscape I tell myself that I respond to . . . and not these picturesque arrangements." In both his writing and his life, he suffered and explored homesickness in two senses: he specialized in nostalgia but also chafed at confinement—knew what it was to be sick of, not just for, home.

In Cheever's uneasy association with the *New Yorker*, which is thor-

oughly documented in the biography, he in a sense played out in microcosm his ambivalence about most of the other respectable relations in his life. He was glad to be an insider there, yet he also chafed at the magazine's strictures and niceties, willing to be undecorous in his demands—pushing for more money, overruling editorial suggestions. "You may have invented Salinger and Brodkey," he once shouted at William Maxwell, "but you didn't invent me." Still, loyalty tended to blunt his belligerence in the end. Though his stories appeared there ever more rarely, he never explic-



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

veys the dislocation that Cheever seems to have felt. No sooner do we learn about Cheever's traumatic childhood burden—his mother told him that his father wanted him aborted and actually invited the abortionist to dinner—than we're back on the sunny surface: "Cheever led an active boyhood life. He played with his dog, an Irish terrier that he loved. . . ." The disparity between internal turmoil and external graciousness intensifies with the years. A later chapter is crammed with news of the Cheevers' active social life during the early to mid-'50s in Westchester, where John

Allied to my melancholy is my struggle with Demon rum. There is a terrible sameness to the euphoria of alcohol and the euphoria of metaphor—the sense that the imagination is boundless—and I sometimes substitute or extend the one with the other.

My performance is sometime comical. I leave my typewriter at quarter after ten and wander down stairs to the pantry where the bottles are. I do not touch the bottles. I do not even look at the bottles and I congratulate myself fatuously on my will-power. At eleven I make another trip to the pantry and congratulate myself once more but at twelve when the bull-horn blows I fly down the stairs and pour out a scoop. The same thing happens in the afternoon. I take long walks, split wood, paint trim and shovel snow and while I exclaim loudly over the beauty of the winter light there lurks at the back of my mind the image of a bottle of sour-mash. It seems to be, most of the time, an equal struggle.

This disparity between the will's great hopes and its weaknesses, between noble aspirations and the needs that lurk below, is at the heart of his fiction.

THE SAME double vision is notably absent in the letters that touch on homosexuality. His life was too divided to make the bridge. He wrote frankly to his lovers and fudged with his friends and thus, in a sense, with himself. His work offers a far more eloquent vision of the conflict—and the possible reconciliation—between his own desires and his idea of the fecund natural order. "It's always been there, for all the world to see," Cheever said of the homosexual strains in his fiction, which should come as no surprise to Cheever readers. Just how confused he felt about how to frame his predicament outside of his writing becomes clear in a passing, poignant comment to a friend who never knew of his inclinations: "Homosexuality seems to be a commonplace in nature," he wrote to Tanya Litvinov, whom he had met on one of his Russian trips, "and if this is so why should [a friend] seem, spiritually, to be so ungainly. Procreative nature is surely not that exacting and vindictive. I would like to live in a world in which there are no homosexuals but I suppose Paradise is thronged with them."

It was a veiled self-portrait, full of ambivalence. "I have always felt there is some ungainliness in my person, some ungainliness in my spiritual person that I cannot master," Cheever once said of himself. Yet he also claimed that his art established a kind of balance, that "literature is basically an account of aspiration or hopefulness." A grasping after grace almost always marks the close of his fiction—as it does in a late story, "The World of Apples," about a famous old poet determined to reject the connec-

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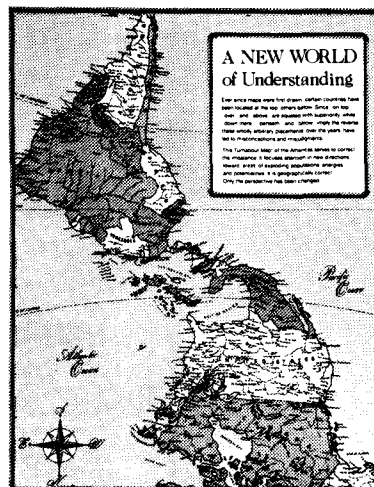
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tion "between brilliance and tragedy": he wants to be sure that his life finishes on a note to match his work, which is admired for its "pungency, diversity, color and nostalgia." To his horror, the poet is suddenly overcome by a vision of human grossness. By the end of the story, Cheever grants his character a renewed conviction in "the inalienable

dignity of light and air." It's a lyrical conclusion, but not quite convincing—either for the poet or for the author who clearly lurks not too far behind him. The power of his best stories and the mystery of his life lie in the fragility of that conviction.

ANN HULBERT

POETRY AND SANITY

A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound by Humphrey Carpenter

(Houghton Mifflin, 1,005 pp., \$40)

The American Ezra Pound by Wendy Stallard Flory

(Yale University Press, 272 pp., \$25)

Ezra Pound was a poet. For saying something as banal as that, I have cause. You would not divine from Humphrey Carpenter's life of Pound or from Wendy Stallard Flory's *The American Ezra Pound* that his being a poet is still the first, as it was once the foremost, thing to be said about him. Since his death on November 1, 1972, the most prominent writings about Pound have asked us to believe that he is chiefly interesting as an exemplar of paranoia, a hater of Jews, a traitor to his country, a nutty economist, a tourist attraction at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington. Anything but a poet.

I assume, on the contrary, that Pound's poetry is the main thing, that posterity will take about as much interest in his personal and political exorbitance as we take in the fact that Jonathan Swift put his pen at the disposal first of the Whigs and later of the Tories. I assume, further, that "Sestina: Altaforte," "The Return," "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter," and 20 short poems good enough to place beside *Cathay*, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," and the bulk of the completed 109 *Cantos* amount to a major body of poetry comparable, for quality, to the best of Hardy, Eliot, Yeats, Frost, and Stevens.

Could I prove this? Only by going through the poems, quoting, picking up his themes (mind, intelligence, the affections, man's amity with the hills, myths of renewal and transformation, metamorphosis, the emergence of form from

an undifferentiated matrix), and showing how the poetry, as Blackmur said of it, "provides the *means* of many ways of looking." Like other readers of Pound, I have to jump over the many bits of *The Cantos* I can't construe, land on those I can't fail to understand, and remain convinced by what I understand that the opaque lines are probably just as authentic as the ones I've landed on.

The bits I understand are stepping-stones to carry me over the rest. As in Canto LXXX, one of *The Pisan Cantos*: a Catholic's recollection of the Latin Mass and the Litany of Martyrs, and my happening to know that Morris Spence edited *The Pocket Book of Verse* (1940), help me over a bit of murmuring to a passage so heartbreaking that Pound has to consign it first to French and Italian before working up enough strength to confess it in English:

Favonus, vento benigno
Je suis au bout de mes forces/

That from the gates of death,
that from the gates of death: Whitman or
Lovelace

found on the jo-house seat at that
in a cheap edition! (and thanks to Profes-
sor Spence)

has't'ou swum in a sea of air strip
through an aeon of nothingness,
when the raft broke and the waters went
over me,

Immaculata, Introibo

for those who drink of the bitterness

Perpetua, Agatha, Anastasia
saeculorum

repos donnez à cils
senza termine funge Immaculata Regina
Les larmes que j'ai créées
m'inondent

Tard, très je t'ai connue, la Tristesse,
I have been hard as youth sixty years.

Who, having reached a certain age, does not recognize how hard youth is, and does not warm to Pound for having confessed it, however late in the Pisan day?

I have quoted a passage of memorable inwardness; but you would never guess from Carpenter's book, or from Flory's, that Pound had any inward life. The implication of both books is that everything in his life was external, the friends he made, the enemies, the editors he intimidated. He made it his business to know everybody, but what he made of each relation, we are not told. Carpenter's book tells us how and when Pound came to know these people: Yeats, Hueffer, Hulme, Flint, Lawrence, Henry James, Orage, Amy Lowell, Gaudier-Brzeska, Allen Upward, Joyce, Blunt, Wyndham Lewis, Conrad Aiken, Eliot, John Quinn, Hemingway, Beerbohm, Bunting, Antheil. But we watch these relations as if they passed in a Lord Mayor's parade. If Pound had an inward life, it must have been provoked by the people he couldn't well have known: Chaucer, Campion, Lovelace, Cavalcanti, Landor, Whitman, Browning. But it requires the skill of a literary critic to discern what any of these meant to Pound.

Carpenter shows in his comments on Pound's *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti* (1912) that he has no idea what Pound made of Cavalcanti, or why he took the trouble to make anything: "He conveys no psychological exactitude, but merely indulges in a neo-Elizabethan (or perhaps ersatz-Metaphysical) woolliness of expression, encrusted with archaisms." Carpenter disposes of the *Canzoni* as "the last twitch of poetic corpse, the body being recognizably that of the Pre-Raphaelites." So there is no point in waiting for this biographer to apply to Pound's poetry the skill of a literary critic. He writes about the poetry as if it were merely a rigmarole of hiccups interrupting a life otherwise manageably because externally lived.

Admittedly, Pound is partly to blame. He started as an Imagist, and it makes little difference whether we say that he remained all his life an Imagist, or that he developed into an Objectivist through the long stretch of the *Cantos*:

under either designation, he produced images, and left it to the reader to determine what bearing each image has upon the context prepared for it. Imagism is radically different from the Symbolism diversely adumbrated by Yeats, Eliot, and the early Joyce. In Imagism, you set one luminous detail, something seen or imagined as if it were seen, beside another produced by the same act of apprehension, and you let the reader cope with the energies released by the passage from one image to the next. The reason why Pound and Wyndham Lewis are closer kin than Pound and Eliot or Pound and Yeats is that Pound and Lewis were opposed, as if on grounds of civic hygiene, to the definition of reality in terms blatantly favorable to one's subjectivity. But this doesn't warrant anyone's assumption that Pound and Lewis were merely machines for the production of images. I speak of bias, not of a constitutional defect.

Against Imagism you could argue, as Empson did, that while a poet is engaged in the production of an image, he can't allow for consecutive debate. An image is an event, italicized for attention; it stands apart from the ordinary processes of argument or conversation. But surely it permits discussion in the end. I agree with Blackmur that in the long run Pound makes you look at things in various ways, but he starts by making you look at a few things in one way; his way. So a biographer like Carpenter—intent on an exhaustive external portrait—could claim, at least to begin with, that Pound's entire life was a matter of gaining new experiences as if he were looking at a sequence of new objects. The objects were friends, lovers, associates, rivals, governments, cultures, civilizations.

But this claim won't hold, because however Pound encountered each new experience and whatever he made of it, we have to look at each in the round now that we have the signs of Pound's reactions—documents, letters, poems; we have to see it north, south, east, and west. Let me give an example. For a week in August 1919, according to Carpenter, Eliot joined Pound and his wife, Dorothy, on a walking holiday in the Dordogne. Carpenter's account of the event is brief:

Together, he and Ezra examined the castle of Excideuil, associated with the troubadour Giraut de Bornelh, where, according to Canto 29, Eliot told Ezra: "I am afraid of

the life after death"—and, after a pause, "Now, at last, I have shocked him."

Eliot relaxed enough by the end of the holiday to grow a beard—Richard Aldington said it looked awful. Ezra and Eliot left Dorothy sketching at Excideuil and walked together to Thiviers and Brantome. Ezra reported to Dorothy by postcard: "T. has 7 blisters." Eliot then departed to examine the Dordogne prehistoric cave paintings by himself before returning to London.

There is nothing wrong with this, except that it is entirely external. It treats the holiday as if it were merely a visual event. If you want to see what a stereoscopic account of the holiday looks like, you may consult Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era*, where you will find, richly elucidated, the significance of Excideuil and Montségur, the latter alluded to in Cantos 76 and 87, "sacred to Helios." According to Kenner, the Pounds were at Montségur "on or about midsummer day," for good reason because Montségur is not a fortress but a sun-temple "across whose unfortified threshold shadow bounds light diagonally at midsummer noon." As for Eliot, the mind that examined the prehistoric cave paintings was already much engaged with the meaning of a live tradition, and with the force of perception by which such paintings, Beethoven's last quartets, and the art of Marie Lloyd may be brought together in a particular zone of consciousness. Kenner's fine pages elucidate this matter more instinctively than Carpenter's account of a summer vacation, on the face of it much like any other.

YOU WILL have noted that Carpenter refers to his subject as "Ezra." It is a procedure I find irritating, but consistent with his presentation of Pound as a precocious, clever-clever schoolboy who would have been improved by getting a good drubbing every now and again. Blank to any notion of what Pound was doing in *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, Carpenter says:

Rather, one should be amazed that he got any of it right. He had behaved like a lazy and ignorant schoolboy faced with a Latin text that he has not prepared, who has forgotten to bring his 'crib' with him into the classroom but trusts to his own luck and inspiration.

In the John Adams Cantos, Carpenter reports, "we encounter a mind in chaos."

Carpenter's sense of Pound is based on the unearned assumption that "we" are nicer as well as saner than Pound was, and

that he wasn't much of a poet either. The fact that he was a remarkable poet and "we," by and large, are not, is not allowed to count. We are to believe that Pound went mad sometime in the 1930s and exhibited his madness by grossly attacking the Jews and by making treacherous wartime broadcasts on behalf of Mussolini. But he wasn't mad, according to Carpenter, when he was brought to trial in Washington on November 27, 1945, or when a jury, on February 13, 1946, found him unfit to plead because of "unsound mind." Presumably he was feigning madness in a desperate attempt to avoid being

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by A.R. Thurar

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executed, like his fellow broadcaster in the hands of the British, William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw). The device, of committing Pound to St. Elizabeth's, it is suggested, was the only way to avoid executing him for treason: it is a pity that he had to be kept there for 12 years, but given the mood of postwar America, it wasn't feasible to let him go before April 18, 1958, when the indictment was at last dismissed. That is, more or less, the standard account of the matter.

MY OWN view is that Pound was never mad. He was maddened by what he regarded as the criminal folly of Roosevelt's administration, especially in regard to money and banking. He was already anti-Semitic. The main reason he wasn't executed in 1946 was that most Americans thought he was so daft that he didn't need to be put down; it was enough that he should be prevented from making a further nuisance of himself. Even before the trial, there were thoughtful people, like Wallace Stevens, who felt that Pound's being a genius made no difference to the case, but that what he did was only mildly noxious. On November 9, 1945, while Pound was still in the cage at Pisa, Stevens wrote to Charles Norman:

There are a number of things that could well be said in his defense. But each one of these things is so very debatable, that one would not care to say them, without having thought them out most carefully. One such possibility is that the acts of propagandists should not entail the same consequences as the acts of a spy or informer because no one attaches really serious importance to propaganda. I still don't smoke Camels, don't eat Wheaties and don't use Sweetheart soap. I don't believe that the law of treason should apply to chatter on the radio when it is recognizably chatter.

Flory, like Carpenter, thinks that Pound went mad in the 1930s. He started out as an American Jeremiah, and carried that role to the extreme pitch of exhibiting "a very imperfect grasp of his surrounding reality." She speaks of Pound's "paranoid state of mind," from as early as 1935. But she is more specific than Carpenter. She argues that the situation that drove Pound out of his mind was Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935. She refers to "the unconscious decision which he took at the time of the invasion of Abyssinia to deny the fact of Mussolini's belligerence and to rationalize away all evidence of it." Thereafter "the very qualities of intelli-

gence and imagination which had made him a great poet now became the means of his undoing." The only objection I see to this is that some of Pound's greatest poems, including *The Pisan Cantos*, were written long after Abyssinia, in the years of his alleged insanity. He certainly did bizarre things before and after 1935, like offering himself, in April 1935, to Huey Long as a suitable secretary of the treasury. But his predominant emotions were anger, rage, and despair. I don't see the need for such words as "psychotic" and "paranoid."

Finally, Flory offers an odd contrast between Pound and Eichmann:

Eichmann was calm and unemotional and was directly involved in activities that led to the killing of Jews. Pound was frenetic, angry, irrational, and obsessive and did nothing that led either directly or indirectly to the taking of any action against Jews whatsoever. It is of the utmost importance to be aware that Eichmann's calm is symptomatic of a moral irresponsibility that is not only far greater but also, in a way that is made clear by its lethal consequences, qualitatively different from Pound's.

I agree with that. But I suppose the differences were always acknowledged. Eichmann was executed. Pound wasn't.

I think that when the jury declared Pound unfit to plead because he was then of unsound mind, the indictment against Pound should have been dismissed. Carpenter is critical of Pound's lawyer Julien Cornell for his handling of Pound's defense. Cornell saved Pound's neck by claiming that he was insane, but

he didn't see that this defense would put him under restraint for an indefinite period of years in St. Elizabeth's, and that if his treatment there were to restore his wits, he could then be tried for the old treason. Cornell was at fault in another respect, too: he shied away from asking, in February 1946, that the indictment be dismissed, presumably because he thought that the American public would be enraged to see Pound released to go back to Europe. When he got around to making a petition for habeas corpus, in February 1948, and it was rejected, he didn't appeal, mainly because Dorothy Pound, for reasons not yet clear, told him not to proceed.

In the event, the years in St. Elizabeth's didn't do Pound much harm. He received visits from his wife, and in due course from Charles Olson, Ronald Duncan, James Laughlin, H. L. Mencken, Theodore Spencer, Marianne Moore, and many other well-wishers. In the later years he attracted to his orbit sundry hippies and groupies. Various women gave him, one gathers, sexual service. But meanwhile *The Pisan Cantos* was published in 1948, and *Section Rock-Drill: 85-95 de los Cantares* appeared in 1955. Silly, perhaps; a victim of his own rage, yes; but not mad.

DENIS DONOGHUE

Denis Donoghue is the author, most recently, of *England, Their England: Commentaries on English Language and Literature* (Knopf).

PROTECTION RACKET

Honest Graft:

Big Money and the American Political Process
by Brooks Jackson

(Knopf, 337 pp., \$18.95)

All too rarely, an investigative reporter steps back from the day to day business of exposé and considers the larger implications of his story. Brooks Jackson has done just that. *Honest Graft* is by far the best of the recent works on the effects of big money on political democracy. Jackson, who covers campaign finance for the *Wall Street Journal*, is the most diligent and entertaining of the daily reporters covering that smarmy beat, and also

a subtle analyst of implications of what he unearths.

Jackson's tone, though serious, manages to avoid the dreary indignation characteristic of reformist tracts. This is a good tale, wise to the folkways of American politics, chock full of delightful anecdotes, and, in the spirit of Plunkitt of Tammany Hall and Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley, not without a storyteller's appreciation of a good rogue. If

you can imagine a book that manages to blend both the pungency of G. W. Plunkitt with the high purpose of Lincoln Steffens, this is it. Jackson is also well versed in the political science literature on campaign finance, whose insights he marries deftly with his own reporting.

JACKSON enlists as his guide for his descent into the political underworld the perfect Virgil, California Congressman Tony Coelho during his tenure as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), 1980-86. (Cashing in millions of dollars worth of IOUs, Coelho has since moved up to Democratic whip.) Though Jackson had previously written some unflattering stories about Coelho, the congressman was induced to make a Stockman-Greider-style bargain with the reporter. Jackson got total access to Coelho's confidential conversations, memos, fund-raisers, etc. The only condition was that Jackson not write about what he learned until Coelho's term as DCCC chairman was up.

Normally the implicit bargain in Congress is friendly treatment in exchange for brokered access. But if Coelho expected this deal from Jackson, he must have been disappointed. Reporters—at least those with integrity—tend to get the better of such bargains. The picture Jackson paints is not very attractive, though on balance Coelho comes off as less an outright scoundrel than a clever operator making the best he can as a partisan Democrat of a heads-they-win, tails-we-lose dilemma. The dilemma is this: Heads, Democrats fail to go after serious money, and the Republican Party wins. Tails, the Democrats do go after big money and the process of cultivating donors necessarily blurs the Democrats' historic populist ideology.

In their effort to persuade business PACs to invest in Democrats, the DCCC staff pushed candidates who could claim business credentials. "We would try very hard to promote people who were more moderate," Jackson quotes a DCCC staffer. "We would go there with biographies and say, Well look, he's owned his own Pizza Hut." Coelho's specialty was a not very well disguised protection racket. Business groups might prefer Republicans ideologically, but Democrats controlled the House and Democrats had to be worked with. In the 1970s, the Republican Party exploited its new ideological and technical prowess to wean trade associations from marriages of convenience with congressional Democrats. But under

Coelho's stewardship, the Democrats recovered their latent leverage before they lost their sole remaining power: incumbency.

For example, the National Association of Home Builders, one of Washington's best-funded lobbies, but one very dependent on subsidies and tax breaks, was increasingly donating to Republicans. When New Jersey Democratic Representative Joe Minish found himself redistricted and vulnerable to a GOP challenge by a builder, the Home Builders supported his opponent. Coelho made sure a letter was sent to the builders' lobby, over the signatures of House Speaker Tip O'Neill, Majority Leader Jim Wright, Banking Committee Chairman Fernand St Germain, and Ways and Means Committee Dan Rostenkowski, warning that the re-election of "our dear friend" Minish was a "number one priority" and shaking down the builders for \$5,000. The letter ended with the threat: "The NAHB has a good relationship with Democrats in the House and we would like to see that relationship continue and grow. Your action in this race causes us to be concerned that the relationship will be damaged." (Nice little industry you have there. It would be a shame if . . .)

WHILE SOME legislators and lobbyists alike have increasingly felt demeaned by the shakedown ritual, others find it a congenial and secure system. Minnesota Republican Senator Rudy Boschwitz, as Jackson tells the story, quite literally sells access. He gives his campaign contributors "access stamps," color-coded according to the size of the contribution, advising them to attach the stamps to all official correspondence and promising that the big-donor stamps will get prompt attention. "Common Cause says this is the way to buy a senator," Boschwitz told one business audience. "You ought to try. My campaign needs the money."

Does this cynical sale of access hurt Boschwitz's standing with the good voters of Minnesota? Evidently not. The word is that leading Democratic politicians are passing up challenging Boschwitz in 1990 because he seems too well entrenched. Coelho's accomplishment was to prove that Democrats could play this game every bit as deftly as Republicans. When Coelho took over the DCCC, its Republican counterpart was outfund-raising the Democrats 13-to-1. By the time Coelho moved up to whip,

Democrats had actually raised \$48.1 million to the GOP's \$30.2 million.

Jackson's title is taken from Plunkitt's characterization of the way the Tammany legislators of his day used their influence over public spending to line their own pockets. By analogy, modern congressmen use their legislative influence to shake down industry PACs for campaign contributions. Jackson sees the corruption as twofold. First, and most obviously, congressmen begin dancing to the tune not of their own constituents, but of their financiers. More ominously, an incumbent congressman armed with PAC money becomes all but impossible to dislodge, since few PACs invest in challengers. That too evokes Tammany, where incumbents never faced defeat. The House, Jackson argues persuasively, has become nothing so much as a "re-election machine designed principally to return incumbents to office . . . a kind of American life peerage."

The conceit that PAC money merely purchases an elusive commodity called "access" and not hard influence, Jackson demonstrates in anecdote after anecdote, is sophistry. A good case in point is the now catatonic savings and loan industry. The S&Ls invested heavily in Democratic congressmen via Coelho. They were rewarded when the House Democrats repeatedly intervened to shield the corrupt industry against the rigors of even Reagan-style regulation. Jackson chronicles the twin career of one archetypal character, Thomas Gaubert, both a prized Democratic campaign contributor and a shady S&L entrepreneur who repeatedly called on congressional friends to protect him from the regulators. Last November, Representative St Germain, chairman of the House Banking Committee, suffered a rare incumbent defeat over his own dual role as S&L protector and covert profiteer. But far too few such congressmen are ever held accountable for selling out to special interests.

THE PROBLEM, as Jackson shows so devastatingly, is that there is no such thing as innocent, "honest" graft. Nor is Coelho's laundering of business contributions to keep relative liberals in Congress without a terrible price. In this respect, I have one bone to pick with Jackson. He sees the malady as essentially civic: business PACs, labor PACs, environmental PACs, and so on, are depicted as more or less equivalent evils, since they all use money to buy votes. This argument is of course true as far as

it goes. But it ignores the partisan tilt, in which fat cats pay to keep Republicans in office to vote the way Republicans vote anyway, while the same moneyed interests pay Democrats to vote more like the GOP. In the end, this pushes the entire polity toward the right, and sets back not just democracy in general but Democrats in particular.

Jackson is entirely on target when he identifies campaign money as the source not only of corruption, but of democratic corrosion. "America is becoming a special interest nation where money is displacing votes," he writes. "Congress commands less and less support among the electorate as it panders increasingly to groups with money, yet its members cling to office like barnacles." Indeed, if the incumbent is impregnable, why bother to vote? The constitutional system of checks and balances seems to have mutated into one in which Democrats (marketing incumbency) keep permanent control of the House of Representatives, Republicans (using superior campaign technology) normally win the White House, and only the Senate offers occasional spirited campaigns (apparently because challengers can raise enough money for statewide races to be competitive).

What is to be done? Like nearly everyone else who has studied the problem, Jackson has his own scheme. He proposes stronger parties, which would receive public subsidies and become the principal source of campaign finance; a ban on out-of-state campaign contributions; tax credits to induce more small donations; more disclosure, and a stronger, independent Federal Election Commission. Under Jackson's plan, PACs would be prohibited from making campaign contributions, but would be encouraged to do grass-roots lobbying.

These proposals, Jackson observes, will be dismissed by Washington insiders as hopelessly naive. But even with these reforms, the system would retain a pro-incumbent tilt. Because the Supreme Court, to a great extent, has defined campaign spending as symbolic free speech, and because the Federal Election Commission has turned a blind eye to subterfuges, the post-Watergate reforms mutated into even worse abuses. Real reform may have to give up attempting to limit campaign spending and concentrate instead on insulating the political system from its effects. For example, congressmen could be limited to, say, five terms, which would give a district an open seat

at least once a decade; television stations, which are licensed by the government, could be prohibited from selling time for campaign commercials.

The premise of political democracy, after all, is one citizen, one vote. This first principle is diametrically at odds with that of democratic capitalism—one dollar, one vote. To remain democratic, the political realm of the society must make heroic efforts to prevent money from indulging its natural impulse to purchase influence. Other democratic nations manage to keep money at bay more effectively than the United States. At issue is not just something called "corruption," but political democracy itself.

ROBERT KUTTNER

CORRESPONDENCE, from page 6

Here's the relevant passage on state control of the press: "In the long run, a democratic political order requires far wider control of and access to the media. Serious discussion of how this can be done, and the incorporation of fundamental media reform into political programs, should be high on progressive agendas." I read this as a call for more state control. I wrote that the authors "dismiss the standard sources on the countries they write about." By standard sources, I mean the American press, which usually weighs the government handouts against other sources.

Herman and Chomsky write, "The mass media do, in fact, literally suppress a great deal," and in the book they accuse news organizations of refusing to print important facts for political reasons. The idea of suppression of information implies at least an internal conspiracy at big news organizations between a correspondent and editors. I have seen such things happen a few times, but the reason was always fear of losing an advertiser. Right-wing dictatorships don't advertise.

Mr. Ward, that was a dumb mistake on my part, and I'm sorry.

TRB, from page 4

viet empire are unprecedented in history. None of the classic concepts that make the past intelligible explains Communist imperialism. The Soviet empire does not follow the bell-shaped expan-

sionist curve of previous empires. Yet the democracies persist in believing that it will decline of itself and inevitably grow more moderate."

And further: "Other totalitarian systems were defeated or simply crumbled with age. . . . Only Communist totalitarianism is both durable and immutable."

In the light of what has happened in Afghanistan, and in the light of what is happening inside the Soviet Union itself, this theory of Communist exceptionalism—this insistence that communism is unchanging and unchangeable—now seems shockingly ahistorical. It has been shown to have no predictive value, an important test for any theory.

Revel's ideas achieved enormous currency on the American right. They trickled down from his book through journals like *Policy Review* and the *American Spectator* before finding their final resting place in the opinion section of Sun Myung Moon's *Washington Times*, the swampy repository of the conservative conventional wisdom. When this process was about half complete, toward the end of 1984, the editors of *National Review* were struck by the following Revelation:

"Five years ago, liberal opinion predicted that Afghanistan would be the 'Soviets' Vietnam.' How could that be, without a free press and the freedom of opposition that liberalism also prescribes? . . . A society that has only *Pravda* may be less blessed than a society that has the [New York] *Times*, but it enjoys a strategic advantage."

It happens that the analogy between Afghanistan and Vietnam is quite a good one as historical analogies go—much better, for example, than the analogy between Munich and Vietnam. The more important error here is the doctrine that a free and critical press is a strategic disadvantage. That doctrine is now being questioned even in the Soviet Union itself. It's time for it to be questioned by American conservatives as well. A free and critical press may sometimes be a tactical disadvantage for a society. But surely it is a huge advantage strategically, because it enables a society to apprehend and correct its own defects.

The Russians' Afghanistan fiasco just might help American conservatives rid themselves of what somebody once wisely called an inordinate fear of (as distinct from a principled opposition to) communism—and maybe even an inordinate fear of democracy, too.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Text 'n' Roll

ANOTHER FORT HAS fallen. Surely I am not alone in my affection for Norton Critical Editions; they filled this college student with an altogether undeserved feeling of intellectual authority. That was in the good old days, when a critical apparatus made you strong. (I remember vividly the rush of wisdom from a few pages by Valéry on sincerity, which an editor with a personal interest in my education had appended to the Norton Critical Edition of *The Red and The Black*.) Well, a new Norton Critical Edition has just appeared, of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*. The translation, by Michael R. Katz, chairman of the department of Slavic languages at the University of Texas, reads very smoothly; and Katz has included background material and critical readings that conform to the high Norton standard. Except on page 131, which is where the fort falls.

ON PAGE 131, following some relevant, rebarbative passages from Ralph Ellison, there appear, as one of "several works that appear to have been inspired by *Notes from Underground*," the words of a song by "two lads from Liverpool." The page looks approximately like this:

... Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility.

JOHN LENNON
AND PAUL McCARTNEY

Nowhere Man

He's a real nowhere man
Sitting in his nowhere land,
Making all his nowhere plans
for nobody.

Doesn't have a point of view
Knows not where he's going to
Isn't he a bit like you and me?

and so on.

IT IS ALMOST beneath the dignity of literary discussion to point out that the professor has misread the pudlian text. Dostoyevsky's abjection *does* know what it's missing and *doesn't* want the world at

its command. Of course the professor could retort that by privileging the trope of optimism and valorizing the collapse of difference the Beatles emblemize precisely the paradoxalism that is the Dostoyevskian strategy; but I hope he doesn't. I wonder, though, whether his breakthrough in pedagogy might be more widely applied. So, as a first exercise in text 'n' roll, I propose the following supplementary readings for the critical editions of the following works:

The Stranger ... "He's A Rebel"

Anna Karenina ... "Rescue Me"

Remembrance of Things Past ... "Where or When"

Heart of Darkness ... "The Lion Sleeps Tonight"

The Flowers of Evil ... "It's A Sin"

The Great Gatsby ... "This Diamond Ring"

Crime and Punishment ... "Who's Sorry Now"

Herzog ... "Please Mr. Postman"

The Death of Ivan Ilych ... "Alone Again Naturally"

Madame Bovary ... "Me and Mrs. Jones"

The Catcher in the Rye ... "He's So Shy"

Manon Lescaut ... "Born to Run"

Night ... "I Will Survive"

Pride and Prejudice ... "Like A Virgin"

Portnoy's Complaint ... "Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby, Standing in the Shadow"

Committed humanists are invited to submit their own suggestions to Norton Critical Editions, W. W. Norton & Co., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10110.

SUCH ARE THE pastimes of the age of Poppy and Bar. Doctrines languish like the homeless along Pennsylvania Avenue, the mahi mahi is flat flat, the West Wing is lost in ethical theory, John Tower is erotically interesting, the country tells the Congress to drop dead. (They should have just called the pay raise "humanitarian assistance.") Worst of all, perhaps, is the sacrifice of Nancy Reagan to the 22nd Amendment: Erika Kane has left the show. But things could be worse. Ronald Reagan could still be president.

THE MAGNITUDE OF the difference between Reagan's presence and Reagan's

absence is not something that Americans who live beyond the Beltway can fully grasp. For years Washingtonians lived in a city commanded by a man who taught that the earth is flat. There were flat-earthers everywhere, therefore; and those with a less adulterated sense of intellectual integrity hoped to make it into the charmed circle by pointing out that the earth is not, after all, a perfect circle. There was always something a little humiliating about opposing Reagan. You had the feeling that finally you were being made a fool. (On his very last day in office, Reagan told a journalist that "it's difficult to disbelieve the prophecies of the Bible" and praised the work of theologians who affirm that "in recent years we have begun to see the prophecies of some of the things that the Bible says would foretell it ... natural disasters, changes in weather and violent storms and earthquakes and things of that kind.") Say what you will about Bush, he is at least a man for whom the earth is round.

THE FLAT-EARTHERS—Reaganites, neo-conservatives, Straussians—have sought shelter in the offices of Dan Quayle. They will remake the wild hellion in the image of their own desire. And if Bush isn't bad enough, there's Gorbachev. Anti-communists without communists are a poor lot. Some of them will have to find new causes. The *Washington Jewish Week* reported recently that "As Reagan Era Ends, Asst. Sec. of State Abrams Turns Attention to Jewish Politics." Not a moment too soon. "Many American Jews," Elliott Abrams maintains, "are more concerned about fighting Reagan than with supporting Jews in Central America." Sandinismo and The Jewish Question, again. Now, I have met my share of *contras*, some of whom are worthy, and funny, they don't look Jewish. Abrams is cheaply pandering. "The more you care about Judaism, the more likely you are to vote Republican," he continued, praising the electoral enthusiasm of Orthodox Jews for Bush. Nothing like the neo-orthodoxy of the neoconservative who does "Nightline" on *shabbos*. Isn't he a bit like you and me.

LEON WIESELTIER